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THE CROSS OF FIRE

The CROSS *of* FIRE

A ROMANCE
OF LOVE AND WAR TO-DAY

BY

ROBERT GORDON ANDERSON

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1918

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Published November 1918

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THE CROSS OF FIRE

CHAPTER I

NUMBER FOUR EAST-BOUND

Two riders jogged slowly over the Arizona desert towards the little town. That they were as much at home in the saddle as a sailor is on deck could be seen at a glance, for they did not bob up and down in that awkward, jerky fashion of smart equestrians in city parks, but rose and dipped and swayed gracefully with the motion of their mounts as if there were but one combination of muscles and sinews between rider and horse.

It is hard to gauge a man's height in the saddle, but the one on the bay must have been six feet with an inch to spare, the rider on the chestnut at least six inches under that. The taller wore khaki, with a sergeant's chevrons on the sleeve. He was erect as he was tall, lean of figure, and spare of face, bronzed and weather-beaten. A close-cropped mustache and a shrewd, quizzical, observant grey eye complete the inventory of his physical characteristics. As for

the catalogue of the traits of the real man within, the rider at his side, and in fact every veteran of D Troop of the Eleventh Cavalry, would have borne witness to these: an unswerving loyalty to his friends, a never-failing steadiness, a capacity for hard work when on duty, and an irrepressible fondness for a practical joke when off. That is the way they would have sized up Jefferson Blake, top sergeant of D Troop, Eleventh Cavalry, Texas-born, veteran plainsman and trooper, although they probably would not have phrased it like that. If you had asked his comrades for their honest opinions of "Old Jeff," as every one called him, they would have said something about "being there in a pinch," "they don't make many like him," or, "the kid's lucky to have him for a bunkie."

Perhaps they might have added, "Jumpin' Jehoshaphat, but you ought to hear 'Old Jeff' a-lettin' out religion! He *sure* can go some!"

For he was a genius at this gentle art. Sometimes the care with which he polished his epithets reminded one of the infinite detail of a Meissonier painting; sometimes he inclined to the impressionistic with great splashes of colorful language; now and then he was simply Futurist, his imprecations resembling nothing

so much as a greenhouse on the edge of a steep hill suddenly hit by a cyclone.

But with real danger ahead, Jeff never indulged in unnecessary comment; then he was a sphinx with a brain working as rapidly as a machine gun. His mount was better and more affectionately cared for than any in the regiment, and many an officer's wife quartered in a Western Army post could tell of his tenderness to her children.

There was just a hint of this affection in the way he looked at the rider in civilian clothes by his side — his "bunkie." "Old Jeff" was fifty-five and "the Kid," as he still called him, twenty-seven years younger.

The latter's rugged physique promised all that endurance and driving power that so often goes with stockiness. The shoulders showed great strength, and when out of the saddle his shoulders could not laugh at his legs. While his companion was lean of face and bronzed and weather-beaten the boy was full faced and ruddy, with a bright, clear eye, full of humor, and ever wandering, as if he were always on the lookout for adventure — the clear eye you sometimes see in the explorers of the Pole or the far places of the earth.

The birth records in a little village in Vermont, which he had not seen for years, gave a fairly dignified arrangement of letters to distinguish him from his fellow-men — James Garrison Owen. However, this had been generally blue-pencilled by the folks back East and his mates in Troop D to plain "Garry Owen."

"How do them clothes feel after three years of khaki?" asked Jeff, as he fumbled in his hip-pocket for his never-failing consoler, a plug of Silver Star, that staple always carried in stock by every general merchandise store between the Mississippi and the Golden Gate.

"Well, I was crazy to get into 'em this morning, but somehow now I don't like 'em so much. You see, Jeff, I sort o' hate to leave the boys and you — but — hang this sob stuff! We'll be bunking together again before long."

And then after a pause he added a little wistfully: —

"It does n't seem so long since I was saying that I had 'two and a butt' to serve."

"It seems like yesterday — or, anyway, not more'n day before yesterday," the other replied.

Now, "two and a butt" is perfectly good Army slang for a term of two years and a frac-

tion, and this spring of 1915 Garry's three-year term of enlistment had just expired.

The little town was only two miles or so away now — just a huddle of a few one-story buildings with a water-tank for its acropolis. A few miles to the west of it, or so it seemed, the red sun was setting. They turned a moment in their saddles and looked back over the plain. In the distance the tents of the encampment and the black figures of horses and men moving back and forth were so diminutive that Jeff, always full of quaint conceits, whimsically fancied he might have scooped them up in his lean brown fist, packed them in a box, and sent them to the Captain's little daughter for Christmas.

The sundown breeze, or the imagination born of long custom, brought to the ears of the two motionless, listening horsemen the elfin strains of a bugle playing "Retreat" as the tiny flag on the pole, that looked no bigger than a needle, fluttered to the ground.

It was answered by a faint whistle from the north, and turning they saw a far-away train with pin-pricks of light in the windows moving over the plain, so small it might also have been packed in a toy box and sent along with the other one of Jeff's fancy.

"There's No. 4," said he. "Better be moseyin' along."

A gentle touch of the spur, and they galloped on into town.

And a little later Garry, leaning from the platform of the last car, felt his bunkie's hand slip from his grasp and Old Jeff called from the twilight: —

"If you ever need me, boy, send for me, and if I'm not a-pushin' up the daisies, I'll come to yuh. Take care of yourself. So long."

He watched the great Transcontinental Limited until it was swallowed up by the darkness and the desert, then he crossed the square of alkali and sand that lay between the station and the saloon, put up his horses, gently stroking the shoulder of the chestnut Garry had ridden for three long years, and entered the door. He drank a finger or two of the usual thing, tried a few hands of the usual game at a table in the corner; but all the amusements of this favorite rendezvous were to-night as stale as the almost untouched beverage in the thick glass at his elbow, so he soon turned in for the night.

CHAPTER II

HEADLINES

THE trip East took four days, which meant ninety-six pretty restless hours for active Garry. There was nothing to do but dawdle over three meals each day in the diner; roll and smoke innumerable cigarettes; listen to smoker gossip of cattle, crops, politics, and war, or the relative merits of Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago; walk for five minutes on the platform when the train changed engines; or lie awake in his darkened berth and watch the stars sail by above the prairie.

But it was the papers that finally got on his nerves. There were always headlines — and the headlines told of grim things across the seas. Garry would pick them up everywhere in the car, and whether from Los Angeles, Santa Fé, Denver, or cities of the Middle West and East, the words "Allies," "Teutons," "Retreat," "Slaughter" glared at him from the tops of the pages until, when he grew drowsy in the close atmosphere of the Pullman, the letters seemed to dance before his eyes — a dance of death —

or to form in battalions that executed strange manœuvres. And just as he was falling asleep against the heavily upholstered seat of the smoking compartment, a newsboy would board the train, shouting the burden of a fresh headline.

It made him strangely uneasy. But the scraps of conversation that floated through the smoke haze were not so electrifying — they were bromides in both senses of the term.

A mountain of flesh — jewelry was his line — partly from a hatred of anything that might disturb his ease and upset the equilibrium of his own little business sphere, blandly remarked, with a wave of his white, pudgy hand: —

"Nix on this war talk."

In those days this was a flippant slogan everywhere, and millions of cards bearing it and similar inscriptions were tacked up over office-desks all over the land.

It really was funny — that white, pudgy hand trying to wave away a cataclysm.

A Kansan, almost as tall as his famous corn, and secure in his wealthy inland kingdom, muttered something about "A lot of madmen in Europe."

And there were remarks from the other travellers to the same effect — "English jealousy —

nothing but greed — a lot of kings — commercial quarrel —" etc., etc.

Every one knows the brand. They were very very common in 1915.

True, a fine-faced Episcopalian Bishop, who had dropped in for a smoke, said: —

"But, my friends, Germany is the greatest menace to law, order, civilization, and Christianity the world has ever seen."

And a clean-cut, idealistic young student from Leland Stanford sprang to his defence: —

"No white man could stand for their atrocities."

But the mountain of flesh, with his white, pudgy hand, dismissed these so easily!

"Nothing but newspaper reports — rumors — happen in all armies."

Most significantly of all, a chemist, with the square head and high cheek-bones that bespoke at least one near German ancestor, exploded with — "Bunk!"

Now Garry had kept silent, for he had just come from the outposts and was anxious to hear what Civilization had to say about it all. He was boyish and care-free and as yet had no very profound convictions about our duty abroad and he was not quite sure of England. Our

rather unfortunate school histories, which he had studied away back in the village school in Vermont, were partly responsible for this. And then the average man cannot always get a very concrete idea of the awfulness of a conflagration he cannot see.

But many a night in the saddle or in barracks he and Jeff had discussed the war, and had somewhat indefinitely longed to be in it — as was natural for active, adventurous souls.

And they were strongly pro-Ally.

"I'll take off my hat to that little fighting bantam Belgium and game old France any time," Garry had often said.

Slowly but surely, although he did not know it, his convictions were being moulded. And Garry Owen was a fighting man — you could tell that by the square jaw of his ruddy, boyish face.

He had been roving around the world since he was fourteen. At that age the last of his "folks" had died, and he had left the Vermont village and beaten his way by what they call "the side-door Pullman Route" to New York. The first day he had drifted to South Street to look at the ships beneath the great bridge. Needing an extra hand, a rascally mate had enticed the tow-headed kid aboard his ship, and he

stayed for the voyage. He served as cook on the four-master, and went around the Horn, then on a "tramp" to the Orient. As the sailors used to say, "It's a great life if you don't weaken"; and the boy did not weaken, but throve on the maggoty bread and worm-eaten pork and all the storm and shipwreck, and became an able seaman at sixteen. But he tired of the sea and sought adventure on land. He became a soldier of fortune in many other and very strange guises — ballyhoo barker for a circus, barkeep, and scene-shifter in a burlesque show (he was only eighteen then and had fallen in love with the blonde Amazon who starred in the slap-stick piece and took this wonderful job to be near the queen of his heart). And that was n't all — he had been cowboy and revenue inspector, Costa Rican revolutionary, and a lot of other things he could not remember himself, and finally wound up in the Army when there was prospect of active service on the Border. And with all the strong fighting qualities there was mixed a fine strain of idealism, inherited from some chivalrous, poetic soul among his Vermont forbears. You could tell it by the good brow and the sudden lighting-up of those clear eyes now and then. So altogether it was not strange that

Garry was troubled by the smoker talk — and the head-lines; but he had not yet come to the Rubicon — or the Marne.

In between these moodier thoughts, Garry puzzled and puzzled over the problem of a job when he should reach God's country, which in his case meant the little State of Jersey. For a profession he certainly was not trained — he cared not a whoop for most business; so as usual Chance decided it for this soldier of fortune.

Her alluring signal — simply a story in one of the papers about a famous detective's *coup*. That meant adventure, activity, romance! Wise in the ways of the world as he was, somewhere deep in Garry's nature the barefoot urchin whistled still — so — the problem was settled when the train pulled into Jersey City.

The sun was just coming up behind the wonderful steel and concrete sky-line of the great city and sparkling on the gilt pinnacles of the Woolworth Building when he ferried across the Hudson. A modest breakfast of coffee and cakes at one of those great-windowed restaurants with marble-topped tables, and Garry looked in the telephone book for the address of the great investigator. And there, when the clock in St. Paul's struck nine, he promptly presented himself.

The smart little whipper-snapper of an office-boy at the railing asked for his card.

"We don't carry cards in the Army, son," said Garry.

"You'll have to give me your name, boss."

"Just tell him a man wants to see him on important business," answered Garry with a mock scowl and threatening manner that frightened the boy and sent him hurrying into the office, only to return with an apologetic —

"Mr. Barnes says that you will have to state your business, sir. He's very busy with his mail."

Garry's eyes twinkled, then grew very stern; he looked mysteriously around the office, burlesquing the tiptoed goose-step of a melodrama detective, and behind his shielding hand hoarsely whispered: —

"*Tell him I 'm the man he wants.*"

Convinced that the shade of "Old Sleuth" or Nick Carter himself had appeared, the lynx-eyed office-boy returned to the inner office.

The cryptic message gained Garry a hearing.

The short, bull-necked, black-mustached, and keen-eyed man in the swivel chair looked at the young soldier as if he expected a stool pigeon or crook turned State's evidence. But this char-

acterization was dispelled by Garry's winning smile, which, with his ingenious way of securing an audience and the recital of his record, gained him a position on the great man's staff, as his representative in New Jersey.

So it was that Garry opened, across the river in Newark, a little office, eight by ten, with second-hand desk and chair and some stationery, and

JAMES GARRISON OWEN

SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR

in gilt letters on the door.

He also invested in a clock. Its insistent tongue was for days the only one that broke the silence of the office, for clients did n't flock Garry's way all at once. He did draw a petty consignment or two which netted him a little, but the month of March and half of April drifted by without much progress.

And every day a new batch of headlines in the morning and evening papers worried him.

Besides the clock, he had hung on the wall a large map of Europe, and the boy spent half of his time rolling cigarettes and pinning the little flags on the see-sawing lines that represented

the trenches of Northern France and Flanders and the Eastern Front. It was a fascinating game, and as he kept shifting them from day to day he could almost hear the big guns calling him, see the fangs of red fire dart from the long black snouts of the big fifteen-inchers, the white smoke and the swift recoil.

"They sure are paging me," he said to himself.

The Colonial Trust Company Building which housed him was a twelve-story structure on Broad Street, the main thoroughfare of the enterprising city. There were perhaps two hundred and forty offices in it, but there were at least five thousand firms registered here, for this was the day of easy corporation laws in the little State of Jersey, and many a concern which did all its business in New York, across the river, had its name on one of the various doors here, although after the incorporation no officer ever crossed the threshold. But mixed in with this mysterious host of phantom companies were several dozen local lawyers, dentists, opticians, etc., and Garry's younger neighbors formed the habit of dropping into his office to hear his yarns of the Army, of circus life, the moonshiners, and the many adventures he had experienced while

knocking around the world. Sometimes when the stock of reminiscences ran low, they locked the door and played poker — really the only profitable business Garry transacted this quarter.

There were three of his acquaintances who dropped in most frequently — Johnny Gargan, a red-headed half-Irishman, a rather poor lawyer, but cherishing ambitions. Since the "boss" of the county had picked him for the Assembly, he had developed an oratorical manner and a taste for flashy clothes.

The second, Gargan's partner, was a bright-eyed, nervous runt of a Hebrew, Joey Bernstein, by name. He was an ex-ambulance chaser and near shyster. His volubility earned him many reprimands in and out of court. You could no more repress him than a regular genuine sneeze.

Henry Wagner, a blond, well-fed salesman, came from the worth-while German stock of the '48 Carl Schurz sort, though he had not the ideals of his father. He did n't speak the language nor did he belong to a Turn-Verein, and he could n't have named one of the Kaiser's six sons correctly. However, for the present he was not at all interested in the war, except as the

Belgian invasion influenced the flax situation and therefore prevented him from filling all his orders.

Acquaintances, these perhaps not of Garry's calibre, but they attached themselves to him, and with that lovable democratic quality which one finds in the small boy who regards as his peers the ragged urchin from Tin Can Alley, the black youngster from the stables, and the yellow dog from Everywhere — a quality Garry had never lost and never will lose — he welcomed the three whenever they "dropped in."

This afternoon, late in April, they stood in the doorway, and Garry did not hear them for a moment, so interested was he in his newspaper and the little gay-colored flags on the map on the wall. He was busily shifting them here and there as he read of the latest movements of the troops, still hearing all the time those big guns booming away.

"Come on, Garry, get out the deck," sang out Johnny Gargan. A month of easy good-fellowship had dispensed with all surnames both Christian and Semitic.

"Hello, fellows; wait till I mark this last dent the French made in the Boches' line yesterday. That old Papa Joffre is sure a wonder."

"Still at it," laughed Henry.

"Oh, cut that, Garry," broke in Joey. "Why waste time on this fool war?"

"You've said it, Joey," the Irishman added. "It's nothing but a commercial quarrel between Germany and England, anyway."

"For God's sake, get something new; that's pretty old stuff for two lawyers supposed to be intelligent to pull," Garry shot back at them as he stuck a little red-headed pin a sixteenth of an inch from Arras.

And "old stuff" it surely was. They were representatives of mongrel America — the German, the Irishman, the Jew. Not such bad fellows either, and perhaps from the crucible of a real crisis they might emerge real men. If actually confronted by the sight of those murderous soldiers in grey that swarmed over Belgium, crippling helpless women and babies, one, at least, maybe all of them, would never again have used the word "neutrality" — that word that covered such a multitude of sins in 1914 and 1915, and even in 1916. And this lazy, indifferent, shapeless thing we labelled "neutrality" — which he heard in so many quarters — was fast getting on the boy's nerves, and they continued to throw more and more of it in his direction this afternoon.

"Go at him, Johnny," whispered Joey; "watch it get his goat."

They succeeded, for Garry turned and answered them, earnestly and almost savagely: —

"If I ever hear you fellows pull any more of that stuff, I'll throw all three of you out of the office. I used to think that we ought to keep out of any trouble in Europe — but — I'm not so sure about it now. And I'm not so sure but what this *is* our quarrel and a fight for civilization. I really believe the time's coming when we're going to get in it. If it were a betting proposition I'd take bets at a hundred to one that we'd be in it within a year. And I'd take the long end too — only it's too serious for a betting proposition."

It was just such remarks as these he had been hearing so often that were fast crystallizing his sympathies into convictions — and with Garry *conviction* meant *action*.

The three were silenced, but not convinced, and they shrugged their shoulders and left the office, and no chips clicked on Garry's desk that afternoon.

A little later he locked his door and took the tube to New York and walked over to a little red brick house in Greenwich Village.

It was a very warm welcome he always received in the front room on the second floor, and he boyishly tiptoed upstairs to surprise her. He tiptoed, but as usual he took two steps at a time, for Garry always raced through everything.

Since her son Thomas had enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders and gone across the seas to fight, Margaret MacNeal had lived here alone. But because she was old and feeble and because she had been his nurse in babyhood, Garry came at least twice a week to see her and seldom with empty arms. She was more than his old nurse — she had been mother and all to him ever since his own mother had died seventeen years before, and the affection between them had deepened as the boy grew up to manhood. Even in his wanderings he had never forgotten Margaret MacNeal, and from many a port in a far-away land strange, mysterious parcels had often come to the red brick house in Greenwich Village.

The door was ajar. He listened a second, then, hearing sobbing, entered quietly.

It was a trim little room, spotlessly clean, with white curtains, red geraniums, and a cheery canary in a cage in the corner. A white-haired woman with one of those old Scotch faces, whose

irregularity of feature should seem harsh, but which give the impression of sweetness instead, sat in a rocker by the window. Tears were falling on a letter, which she held tightly clutched in her lap. Hearing his step, she looked up.

"Garry, boy," she called, and like the old face the voice, whose burr should have been harsh, was musical. But it trembled a little and she held her shaking arms out to him.

Garry knelt on one knee by the rocker and, placing his arm around her, patted her white hair, very gently for so rough and ready a soldier.

"What is it, Mother Meg?"

"Tom is wounded — seriously, the letter says."

Trembling she lifted the blurred sheet.

It was from the British War Department stating that her son Thomas MacNeal had been seriously wounded in action and was now in Lydgate Hospital.

"Think o' him lyin' there and I canna gang to him."

In moments of emotion the old nurse always fell back into the old quaint Scotch dialect.

"Don't cry, Mother Meg. We'll fix it some way."

At this the tears stopped and she brightened, for Margaret MacNeal had a profound trust in Garry's ability to accomplish things: the same sort of trust he had placed in her when he was a boy and had bruised his little legs, or wanted a story told, or some new game invented. In her old age the beautiful confidence had been transferred.

And then she jumped up and hurried to the little kitchenette and brought out some tea-things.

"You must have your supper, laddie."

When the moon was beginning to flood with its pale gold this quaint old section of Manhattan, Garry walked home whistling, for he had left her comforted.

And a messenger boy next morning rang the bell as she was dusting her little home. Excitedly she opened the large envelope and clutched to her breast the contents — a second-class passage on a Cunard liner to England. She did n't know that at this very moment Garry with pencil and pad was calculating that the elimination of one meal a day for the next two weeks, when he expected a check for a job he had finished, would see him through — that is, if the remaining meals were eaten in one of those high-

stooled caravansaries, or, better still, at the free-lunch counter, and if various other sundries were cut from his very modest budget.

So Margaret MacNeal sailed on the 2d of May, 1915, on the pride of the Cunard fleet. Her name was the Lusitania. How brave and strong and indestructible she looked, with the great grey hull, and towering funnels, steaming majestically out through the Narrows to the blue deep beyond. It seemed as if no storm or terror could ever harm her.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT VICTORY! ! !

It was on the bulletin-board at Herald Square that Garry, elbowing his way through the tumultuous crowd, first saw the news.

It struck home to millions in New York — the Lusitania, the great ship sunk, with thousands on board! In their offices and in their homes, everything else was forgotten. In elevated train and subway, New Yorkers, who for years had buried themselves in their evening papers and suspiciously kept their hands on their watches if one who had not been properly introduced but asked, "What station is nearest the Times Building," turned to these same strangers and with them mourned over the tragedy or angrily denounced its mad, shrivelled-arm author in Berlin.

"We'll fight — you bet we'll fight!" All over the town, in flats and tenements, fashionable hotels and low cafés, around the bulletin-boards and in the streets, in angry electric currents ran the murmurs. Tens of thousands were for declaring war at once. There had been nothing

like it for fifty years — and there has been nothing like it since, even when two years later we at last declared war. By then the thought of war had become as much of a commonplace as commuting.

In the sad days following, Garry pored over the news that came from Queenstown. Bit by bit it came until he had the whole awful picture of the tragedy —

The great ship serenely sailing in queenly majesty; handsomely dressed first-cabin passengers in steamer chairs and in the palatial saloons; simpler folk in the steerage, babbling light-heartedly; and all scorning the possibility of danger from the lurking assassins of the sea. Then the white trail of foam — and the great ship was struck in her vitals — mortally hurt. Swiftly came the calm announcements from the ship's officers. There was little confusion at first — the summoning of passengers from cabins — the buckling-on of preservers and lifebelts. Above the wash of the waves and the first cries of those who, beginning to realize their danger, became panic-stricken, sounded the creaking of pulleys and blocks as the lifeboats laden with women and children were lowered to the waves. Then increasing confusion — and

calmness and shrieks; prayers and the sound of singing above the turmoil; and selfishness and forgetfulness of self, and — thank God — more of the latter.

And little close-up glimpses of a young woman buckling her life-belt on an aged man, of a famous showman standing sturdily by the rail and saying to the beautiful woman by his side: —

"Why fear death — it's Life's most beautiful adventure."

And other glimpses, — of priests and Protestant ministers bending over the stricken; of a rich young man calling to his valet: "Come on, let's look after the kiddies" — and a little later giving his life for them.

A stewardess, who had grown very fond of Margaret MacNeal in the short three days of the voyage, opened her door hurriedly, but gently so as not to alarm her and buckled a life-preserver on the old nurse.

"What is it?" she asked.

"The ship is sinking — hurry to the boats."

And the stewardess ushered her quickly to the door and out into the passage and called to the assistant purser rushing by, to help the old woman to the deck.

But Margaret turned and in a sweet voice calmly said, again as always in great moments of emotion relapsing into the quaint old dialect: —

"Dinna mind, dearie, we are in God's hands."

Firmly she ascended the stairs, and then on the slanting deck waited, singing the old Scotch version of the Twenty-third Psalm, the one she had so often sung as a girl in the kirk back home: —

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want."

An officer rushed her into a lifeboat, which slowly descended to the waves. She hid her face in her hands as she saw the ropes of the boat next hers catch in the blocks. It turned in mid-air and pitched its shrieking human freight into the pitiless sea.

And they rowed away from the ship's side and all the pathetic accompaniments of the tragedy — the cries, the prayers, the hiss of steam when the flood reached the boilers — and the white arms reaching from the waves for help that did not come.

Darkness fell at last on the waters. The victims were scantily clad and cold, and two women and one aged man died that night, but

somehow Margaret MacNeal lived through those hours.

A little child, separated from its parents, was in the boat. Margaret MacNeal gathered it to her bosom, every now and then pressing a kiss on the matted curls which stirred in the ocean breezes. And she sang to it the lullaby she used to sing to Tom and Garry, and in the long night watches she came to think it was now one and now the other. She refused to let them take the sleeping child from her, and over and over again, above the creak of the oarlocks and the slapping of the waves against the boat and above the wind's song, sounded the lullaby of the old nurse.

Dawn came.

And a little later the rescue. When they carried her to the humble home of some warm-hearted Irish folk in Queenstown, Margaret MacNeal was dying.

Just before the end she managed to scrawl with cramped fingers, in the feeble light of a flickering lamp, two letters — one to her son, the other to Garry.

An old priest entered a large building near the water, not far from the little house where Mar-

garet lay. He looked upon the group of women and then on the rows of children slumbering on the rough tables.

But when he approached the women he saw that they were weeping. And of the children who lay as if in slumber, none stirred ever so slightly. Their faces seemed cut from Carrara marble, with a look of infinite peace about them.

And looking to Heaven, the old priest said: —

"Poor, innocent lambs, they are safe from the German wolves, in the arms of the Gentle Shepherd."

A few days after Garry had finally found her name in the newspaper lists of the dead, the letter, forwarded by the consul at Queenstown, reached him. There were only two lines in the painfully scrawled writing: —

And they would not even spare the bairns. Tell the Americans, laddie, to come over and help us.

Two lines — that was all — but that afternoon, when his three friends dropped in from their offices, they found him locking the eight-by-ten office for the last time.

"Moving day, Garry?" asked Henry.

"Yes, to England — I'm going over to fight."

He said it with what seemed almost a savage sullenness — his boy's way of covering a serious purpose and a sorrow that had cut very deep.

Hardly taking him seriously, they called him a fool and a "chump" and many other things in a friendly sort of way.

"Just to stop a German bullet," said Johnny Gargan disgustedly; and Joey added that often-heard question, which crudely but so aptly summed up the philosophy of a not inconsiderable number of us — at least until the war brought us a better creed: —

"But what'll that get you?"

For answer Garry showed them the two lines in the old nurse's letter.

"If I stayed back now, why, 'way down my back I'd have a yellow streak a yard wide."

And he hurried to the elevator.

CHAPTER IV

BY GRACE OF THE CENSOR

SQUATTING on his haunches in so lowly a position that he just escaped the ungentle reminder that he had spurs on his booted heels, Old Jeff was holding a frying-pan over the crackling fire and trying to coax a few slices of bacon to the proper crispness for the evening meal.

A few months after the close of Garry's term of enlistment, his own had expired, and he had retired to his little ranch in a southwestern county of Texas, which consisted of a few acres watered by Saliva Creek, a half-section of sand and cactus farther back in the desert, and about one hundred and seventy-five head of cattle and a score of horses, with a few other squealing and cackling farm etceteras to boot.

This spring of 1916 he was assisting in the round-up, jointly conducted by a few ranchers of the valley whose outfits, like Jeff's, were too small for separate ventures.

The mongrel-bred cook whom they had hired had always been considered "harmless" (cowboy for "no-account"), but to-day he had proved a downright "bad actor," so he suddenly de-

parted in the general direction of town, bidden God-speed by Jeff's ample boot and some passing remarks. Being handy at almost everything under the sun, the veteran was substituting for the moment as chef of this wonderful Inn, whose floor is the limitless desert, the roof the star-strewn sky, and which always fulfils its promises of perfect appetites and dreamless slumbers.

A horseman, returning from an errand to the ranch-house thirteen miles back from the camp, rode up and handed him a letter.

After the last tin plate had been cleaned with swabs of waste bread and a little water and all had been packed in the mess-wagon, the great herd of restless cattle gradually settled themselves for the night, guarded by three riders who circled around quietly, and the other ranchers stretched themselves on the sand and rolled cigarettes and swapped outrageous yarns, while Jeff opened the fat envelope and read the contents with a delighted grin and an occasional explosive chuckle: —

Somewhere in France
April 18, 1916

DEAR JEFF: —

You know I'm not much of a hand at letter-writing, so you'll excuse my not answering sooner

your last letter which reached me here in the trenches about four weeks ago. To tell the truth we don't find much time to take our little ole pens in hand, anyway, for the Boches have sure kept us busy with their blasted bombardments, attacks, trench-raids, gas, and other cussedness. They've got all those treacherous Greasers in your neighborhood faded, believe me, Jeff, when it comes to inventing low-down, dirty tricks.

Nevertheless, I would n't miss it for the best job in the États Unis. We used to mill over the right and wrong of this war on the Border, you and I, and it was n't quite so clear then, but I see it now. It's a job that's got to be done. We've got to mop up the whole German Empire, from that little tin Me-und-Gott Kaiser, down through all the Unter-Offiziers, then maybe the few poor Fritzies that are honestly misguided will wake up. Now, if we don't mop them up, they'll reach 'way down in El Paso County, Texas, where you are a-enjoying your freedom and yank you by the collar and change that bow-legged gait of yours to a goose-step.

I'm happy, but oh, I'm dirty. A good bathtub at the Waldorf or a Mills Hotel, or even in your little creek, would look like a million dollars to me right now.

I'm writing this in a dug-out by candle-light, a tallow-dip set on an empty box that once carried "Canned Willie." In a hole a bit Nor-Norwest of my handsome mug is a big rat. Well, Mr. Rat just sits there with his little crop of alfalfa and blinks and blinks. The more I look at him, the more he gets on my nerves. He looks just like "Little Willie" — same sort of a profile . . . Excuse me, Jeff, I had to

stop and, as they say in Cherry Hill, I trun my bandolier at Mr. Rat and it caroomed off the side of the dug-out and hit Bill Hawkins on the nose and woke him up. He swore something awful, did Bill. Anyway, it did some good, for his orchestra was badly out of tune. It sounded more like a battery of five-nines.

Speaking of the English, I 've grown to like 'em. After I got a black eye or two for trying to demonstrate that that remark about us being "too proud to fight" had been wrongly transmitted by cable, I learned to love Tommy. He can fight and he is game. They grouch, or as they call it "grouse," a lot, but just as they would at home if Mariar burned the toast or the chops were under-done. And funny, Jeff! Don't let any one tell you the English have n't any sense of humor. I've sprained every rib I have laughing at them.

Swear! They are *artists* at it. As near as I get it, no cussing is complete without something beginning with "bl" to it. It is as necessary to open a real genuwine cuss as a pair of Jacks is in poker. If you want to learn how to express your feelings when you've got a real grouch, come over here, Jeff, and they'll show you how to express them proper.

I've had a stretcher ride already, but three weeks fixed me up. I also had a touch of gas and still feel it a little, though not nearly as bad as some of the boys, who will be laid up a year and more from it, anyway. It's rotten stuff. What hit me worst about that gas was a little dog, who attached himself to our company. He was yellow in hide, but not inside, and he was descended from every kind of dog that ever was, and then some. His tail was so short you could

hardly see it wag. He was a good sport, too, for he never groused about the cooties, but then he'd been training with tame fleas all his life, which is about like sham-battles compared to these on the Western Front. We called him "Ragtime" because he was sort of a syncopated dog, — all the real dog-points had been cut out.

We saw it coming — a low cloud hugging the ground, colored like the spines of the fellows who sent it over, but smelling like Little Italy. I broke all records adjusting my gas-mask, but it was slightly defective and I felt it. But what was worst was this: I had rigged up a gas-mask for the little dog, but with Fritz due to appear out of the gas-clouds I plumb forgot all about "Ragtime," and when I looked down a few seconds later he was frantically pawing his nose, like a mad Australian crawl stroke, as if he were trying to beat off some unseen enemy. And in his eyes just before he "went west" — I always liked those eyes, Jeff — he was thorough-bred dog *there* — was a look as if we had n't treated him quite square. And I guess he was right.

Well, old boy, I must close. It's a hard job, but we've got to see it through, and of course I'll stick.

Write and tell me how the old alfalfa is growing, and all about the Poland-China hogs, and everything. You have n't got a wife concealed on the premises, Jeff? Honest-to-God, you're not deceiving me now, are you?

Your friend and bunkie

GARRY

Jeff's answer, laboriously finished, went forward a month later after the round-up: —

(Exactly where in Texas)
Bar Circle Ranch
Two Miles from Locotown
Saliva Creek, El Paso County
Texas, U.S.A.

June 24, 1916

DEAR KID: —

Were you under the impression you were a-owin me some money — you seme so mighty partickuler about givin away your address. I've got nothin to be ashamed of not even a wife so I'm not a-hidin' mine. But then maybe the authorities are a mite more careful now than in the old-time wars.

I was sure sorry to hear that the Germans had got you, but glad that it was no wurse. You need n't be skeered about that there casualty list unless some sky-pilot's got a-holt of you since I saw you. Then there was too much cussedness in your hide to justify any fear that you'd cash in your checks at so young and tender an age.

But if I was under oath I'd say I missed you boy. Things is pretty tame here though I like the ranch good enough and have made a little money. Beef is high now and I had some prime steers that weighed in pretty good. Them Poland-China hogs you asked about is advancin in their education. They've got thro the multiplyin chapter right smart. So theyve made me a little jag of money too, and I sold ten head of horses to some English agent. He wore a divorced eye-glass and was a high-steppin talker, but he knowed horse flesh. I got 1500 iron men for the lot.

I've read an article in the paper how the boys need the makins, so Im shippin to your company a box of good ole Bull and a few plugs of Silver Star. You

teach the Englishers to give up their damned tea and try Silver Star and the war will soon be over.

Here's hopin' it will soon, and that things will break fine for you.

Your friend

JEFF

Somewhere in France
July 29, 1916

DEAR JEFF: —

Just a line to-night, for to-morrow we go over the top. The other men are sitting near, writing home, and as I have no folks, and you are nearer to me than anybody in the world, I 'll send this to you — that is, I 'll give it to the Captain and he 'll mail it if I " go west " — or — I was going to say was captured — but I won't, for I 'm not going to let that happen. I 've seen enough of what happened to the Canadians. They won't nail me to any cross.

The men are all anxious to take a crack at the Boches again. Their spirit is wonderful.

You 've been a good friend to me, Jeff. You deserve the best that 's coming.

Good-bye, old boy

GARRY

The torrid Southwest summer blazed by and fall came. Every day Jeff jumped on his favorite pinto and loped down the half-mile of road that led from the ranch-house to the gate, but no letters from Garry or the British War Department, in answer to his own inquiry, did the lumbering R.F.D. stage-coach ever deposit in the little tin mail-box by the roadside. Jeff did not know it,

but his own letter to the authorities was resting many fathoms deep in a steamer that had run afoul of a U-boat.

Then January and February passed, with their odd jobs of repairing irrigation ditches and broken fences and such, and Jeff for once in his life began to worry, when the long seven months' suspense was broken by a letter in Garry's handwriting: —

Paignton Hospital, February 14, 1917

DEAR JEFF: —

You were right. I *was* too ornery to kill — but I 'm a darned sight less cussed than you reckoned, for the Boches nearly got me. I have just found out through one of my mates that the Captain of my company mailed the letter I wrote before the attack by mistake. You must have thought there was no more Garry or else that they were grinding me up into Wienerwurst for the Kaiser.

It was a great attack, Jeff. I was nervous that night, and, to tell the truth, I think all the others were too. The man who says he is n't afraid, to my mind, is a damn liar. It's all right to be afraid; it 's the way you express your fear that counts. If it 's simply feeling in your stomach as if you were in an elevator falling from the top of the Woolworth Building clean to the ground, and if you fuss with your ammunition and rifle and look at your radium watch in the dark, and yet you *stick*, why, you are still a man. But if you express your fear by beating it, you 're a coward. That's all there is to it.

Well, I was scared plenty, but I managed to stick. And I'll bet my shilling a day for duration of the war that every other Tommy was afraid too, but each kept the other from knowing it. It's a grand game of bluff, this hero-stuff, but it's a bluff that's pretty fine, just the same, for it preserves the self-respect of the human race.

I have always envied Victor Hugo who wrote "Les Misérables" — that's some story, you ought to read it. I wish I had his head for just one hour and I'd paint a picture for you. But I'll do my best.

An hour before dawn — it was 3.30 by my radium watch — the first gun barked and a shell fell into the German lines. Then one by one the batteries, from the guns of smaller calibre near by to the big heavies fifteen miles back, joined in the chorus. A fellow does not need much imagination in that hell to think of all sorts of funny things. It was surely a devil's chorus from those ten-thousand iron throats, and each variety of shell has a different sound, its own particular fiendish message.

I've heard Sousa's band when it crashed into some grand finish. Now, take that band, forge each instrument of high-tempered steel, expand it to a thousand times its size, then let the winds and hurricanes roar through them, and send their shattering notes of steel-jacketed death into the night, and you'll know what I heard. And all around the blackness of the sky was lit by great splashes of fire. It was magnificent.

Then came dawn and the hour for the attack.

Our officers had a big idea. Our regiment is a Suffolk outfit and has a great reputation in football — soccer, that is. We've had some pretty stiff

matches in rest billets and generally came out on top. We had five footballs which members of the championship team kept deflated under their shirts, for fear somebody might get away with them. Well, just before the whistle blew for the signal to go over the top, the officers ordered the men to inflate those footballs. That's a pretty tough job — blowing up a big heavy football, when your knees are stropping each other and your heart 's a-thumping and there 's a hollow as big as a shell-hole where your stomach used to be. Where they got the wind I don't know. But they did.

Then the whistle blew and the officers took those balls and tossed them over the parapet. The first one flew into a German bullet and plopped and collapsed, but the others fell beyond the wire and bounced along. With a yell as if they were on the football field at home, the men climbed the scaling-ladders, raced through the lanes cut in the wire, and then, right across shell-torn No Man's Land they dribbled those footballs. Do you wonder I say it was magnificent? The spectacle must have smashed the German morale, for they held their fire at first. That bunch of Tommies must have looked like a lot of madmen charging across that field after those four toy-balls, with Death the score-keeper and the goal for ninety per cent of them the little wooden cross.

I went crazy like the rest, and just then I knew I had one of the balls tucked under my arm, beating the wind. Old Bill Hawkins ran up behind me, yelling something about me being a bloody blasted beggar and breaking the rules. In soccer, you know, you can only kick the ball with your foot or butt it with

your head. I could hear part of what he yelled even in that infernal din. Then he jabbed his rifle-butt and knocked the ball from my arm into the wire. Then the Boches from their subway bleachers let loose and hell popped. The ball was in their wire and Bill and I like two crazy men were trying to kick it out. A bullet got him in the napper. Poor old Bill. I'll bet when old St. Peter asks him for the password at the big Lodge meeting up aloft, Bill will shoot the language he knows best, every other word with a "bl" to it. But if the old guy knows his business he'll look into old Bill's heart and see that he was a good old scout and send him pronto over to the quartermaster's for a supply of wings.

By the time old Bill got his, I forgot about the football and thought about my bayonet. But a dum-dum with a little extra English, or I better say German, on it kissed my forehead and something burning hot pierced my elbow and left side. Then the lights went out.

They were n't turned on again till a long time afterwards in the hospital, when they told me I had lain forty hours in No Man's Land. (That's why the Captain got mixed, I guess, and sent you the letter, somehow.)

They've fixed my handsome mug up, but they've ruined my fortune, for that million a year (!!!!!) the motion-picture people offered me to make love to Polly Pretty of the Goo-Goo Films will be cut to a piking five hundred thousand now with this "Mark o' Cain" on my brow.

Don't you believe all that talk about having beautiful ladies a-smoothing your brow in the hospital. When I woke up after a trip to the "pictures" (what

they call the operating-room here), I saw mine had a big wen on her nose. For a long time, while I was out of my head, I was wishing that she would go up to the "pictures" and have that wen cut out.

But I don't think so now. Nurse Boggs is n't so bad-looking. Sometimes I think she is beautiful. Anyway, she is so faithful and kind, and would do anything in the world for the boys. Her smile and eyes are beautiful, and the touch of her hand! They sure are angels, Jeff, these Red Cross people. The best is none too good for them.

I sail for Blighty in March. Blighty means home, you know. With Tommy it is England, with me it means the good old U.S. Why don't you come to New York? You need a rest, anyway. It will do you good to get a shave and to see the new styles.

So long, Jeff, my best to you.

GARRY

So just before the rainy season Jeff decided to accept that rather vague invitation and, leaving his little ranch in charge of a hired hand, left for the East.

CHAPTER V

WANTED: RED-BLOODED MEN

At just about the time Jeff was nearing Fort Wayne, Indiana, on his way East, Garry, home again after his long service in the trenches, was anxiously watching the ticker in an uptown hotel.

"Something's bound to break in Washington to-day, sure," he muttered to himself.

It was much the same old Garry — that is, except for the few marks of affection left by the Germans on his husky body, which consisted of a stiffened right arm, two bayonet wounds in his right side which still throbbed and pained him very often, and a broad red welt that scarred his right temple; these and that graver look in his eyes, the look of one who has looked on death and sacrifice and heroism.

For one hour he watched the ticker anxiously — the tid-bits of news of all sorts and kinds that reeled out on the tape from the glass dome — then the announcement, "President goes to Congress" — then more irrelevant news of the market and stocks and wheat — a steamer sink-

ing — then finally the tiny letters flashed at him this message that thrilled a waiting earth: —

"President asks Congress to declare war."

It had come at last. Time and again, in the two years since the Lusitania was sunk, we had paused on the brink, only to hesitate and withdraw as that reincarnation of Machiavelli, Herr von Bernstorff, skilfully "kidded us along," as Garry expressed it, and now we had taken the plunge. While the tiny tape unreeled its fateful message, one could almost fancy he heard the vast sigh of relief from millions of loyal Americans. As for Garry, he had the trench point of view — the feeling of the man holding the line, who had fought and waited for the help from across the seas that did not come. As he ran for the elevator he could hardly restrain the cowboy yell of his old ranch-days in Arizona.

But his exaltation gave way to depression that night as he lay in his hall bedroom staring at the grim ceiling and rolling an interminable number of cigarettes. He suddenly realized that he himself was out of it — when he so longed to be in it again — he fairly ached all over to be on the firing-line. His friends would have said that he had done his share — a year and a half in the thick of it and seven wounds; it sounded rea-

sonable, but it was n't — he knew better. You see, he had seen too many poilus and Tommies smashed up and sent to Blighty — then patched up and sent back again — they were average men in humble walks of life and yet they were glad to face the guns again. Not that they preferred the terror of the trenches to the peace of their offices and homes, but they felt that no man had done his bit, no matter if he had a dozen "wounded stripes" on his sleeve, as long as those Boches were unlicked.

But next morning, as he read the papers over his coffee and rolls, he brightened suddenly at a headline: —

GREAT DRIVE FOR RECRUITS ON!

"Well, that's one way I can help, anyway, until I'm fit again. Maybe I can tell the boys about what a fine fight it is — a real man's fight, and get some recruits for Uncle Sam."

So eager was he to begin that he hurried over to the recruiting headquarters on Chambers Street. In the early days of the war things were very leisurely and no one had yet appeared at the office. The doors were still locked. After he had waited for an hour, some one with sufficient authority finally came, and Garry was

assigned to an afternoon meeting at the Public Library at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street.

"How do you feel, Garry — nervous?" asked Henry Wagner, who had come over with him out of curiosity, rather than from any very helpful purpose. Neither he nor Johnny Gargan nor Joey Bernstein took the war very seriously yet. They and most of the inhabitants of the Colonial Trust Company Building were too concerned with their own affairs.

Garry stood on the stone pedestal at the corner, tapping his puttees with his swagger-stick, that foolish little weapon the English soldiers carry these days. What it was ever introduced for no one knows unless to keep hands out of pockets and thus insure a more soldierly appearance. Perhaps it performs the same service for the soldiers that fancy-work does for the housewife or chewing-gum for the salesgirl, furnishing an outlet for active nerves.

"I never made a speech in my life," Garry shot out of the corner of his mouth as the introducer was telling about his record and wounds and gallant service. "But this is n't a speech. I'm just going to give them facts — no ladies and gentlemen stuff — just tell 'em what

war is and how they need us over there, and how we've got to hurry and — I wish he'd cut out that hero-stuff." And there was a look of disgust in his bright eye and ruddy face.

But the introducer had finished his peroration at last, and Garry began, a little crudely and bluntly at first, but with a boyish yet manly earnestness and a voice ringing so clearly above the noise of the traffic that the crowds increased and spilt over the curb and the policemen had their hands full.

The procession of richly appointed limousines that rolled by caught his eye —

"We must all sacrifice — this is the poor man's war and the rich man's war. You idle rich . . ."

And just as he was saying this a luxurious touring-car, halted by the traffic, stopped at the curb, and from the rear seat a girl looked up at the speaker.

To emphasize his thought Garry was swinging his little swagger-stick in an arc from person to person in the crowd, pausing for a second as he pointed at each face to force home to each individual his own responsibility. And with these words, "You idle rich," he swung the little stick so that it pointed directly at the girl. He

did not mean to be rude — it was just an accident.

He stopped a second — the swagger-stick dropped. Those eyes shattered his poise — they had that trick, those eyes — many a man could testify to that. They looked at him in amazement at first, then in anger as the words "You idle rich," seemingly flung personally at the girl, struck home.

The spectators, noticing the byplay, curiously turned their faces away from Garry towards the girl in the car. Standing on tiptoe and craning their necks, they caught glimpses of a light-blue suit, wonderfully moulded to match the youthful curve of neck and bust and shoulder, soft white summer furs fluttering in the spring breeze and caressing the loveliness of a cheek that could well afford to scorn cosmetics, and a smartly tilted hat of blue straw on a head of bright brown hair, whose wave was as natural as the color in her cheek. The breeze was kindling that color brightly — the breeze and the shaft which unconscious, embarrassed Garry had flung at her.

Poor Garry! She had returned a shaft which buried itself to the feather — and which, try as he would in later years, he could never pull out.

He was embarrassed. The amused crowd could see that, as he fumbled with his swagger-stick and his brown eyes gazed at the blue — that blue which is sometimes grey and has as many changes of expression as the sea. They blazed now — that is, if sweet blue eyes can blaze — anyway, they had lights of anger in them and they almost routed the boy, who had faced unflinchingly the most deadly German barrage. There was always at this period of her life some little trace of pride about her features — they were particularly haughty now, and Garry's confused gaze fell to the elbow and the smartly gloved hand. The whole posture seemed as if the girl were about to spring out of the car and answer the challenge.

"My, but she's beautiful!" murmured an artist in the crowd.

But then she drew back and sank proudly into the seat and the chauffeur drove on, and Garry caught his breath.

"We are at war" — he stumbled a little again, for the shaft still quivered, and all thoughts of war were routed from his head. Then he collected himself — "And yet we do not realize it" — he hardly could himself just then. But he swung at last into his old stride.

"You must not think of it as three thousand miles away. The British navies and the French armies are keeping the Kaiser and his millions from Broadway, from Fifth Avenue, but if those lines ever break — New York will become another Belgium. Do you want that?"

He was talking with the old fire while the girl was sitting thinking as the car rolled on two blocks below. "Idle rich . . . idle rich . . ." the words accompanied the luxurious purr of the car. "I wonder . . . after all, was n't he right?"

With her usual impulsiveness she spoke to the chauffeur.

"Stop here, I'll walk home."

"All right, Miss."

She stepped to the sidewalk and paused, then she walked back from Thirty-ninth Street uptown, slowly and in deep thought at first, then hurriedly, to join the crowd of listeners at the Public Library. She stayed in the outskirts, but could hear every word distinctly. The boy's clear voice rang above the clang of the cross-town cars, the voices of the policemen, the hoof-beats, the motor-cars, and all the din of the passing throng.

Then as he was nearing the end, afraid that

the speaker might notice her, she walked thoughtfully towards her home in Sixty-second Street, just off the Avenue.

At the corner of Forty-fifth, in her abstraction, she almost collided with a tall passer-by. As he doffed his hat with a "Certainly, Miss," in answer to her murmur of apology, she noticed that it was not exactly like the general run of headgear on Fifth Avenue — in fact, it was a Stetson sombrero. "From the West," she said to herself — and turned to the right, but the stranger had caught a glimpse of those eyes and, bewildered for a second, he also turned to the right. Then followed that amusing sort of dance one sees on the sidewalk in such instances, till at the fourth "sashay" the girl stopped and the stranger with a good-natured smile said: —

"It's very awkward of me, ma'am, but I'm more used to hawsses than these crowds."

He looked so soldierly and erect in spite of his embarrassment, and his weather-beaten face and good-humored, quizzical eye had such a pleasant expression, that she smiled. That smile was so cheery, and so was the "Oh — it's all my fault," which she uttered as she left him, that Jeff walked off, suddenly reversing his judgment of the big city which he had made in a disgusted

soliloquy, very soon after landing at the Grand Central Terminal that morning.

"Herds and herds of people and they mill around so with never a smile or even a howdy to a stranger," he had said; he had been dead wrong — New York was, after all, a very pleasant sort of place and New Yorkers mighty pleasant people.

Of course he would have looked up his old "bunkie" as soon as he reached the city, but Garry, like many good-hearted people and really faithful friends, was very careless in his correspondence. He had written several times while in the dug-outs and billets of Flanders, but not since he had been invalided home, and Jeff did not know his address.

He strode leisurely down Fifth Avenue, looking at the shop-windows and Sherry's and Delmonico's. The languid diners at the little candle-lit tables amused him.

"Wonder how they'd enjoy sour dough and sow-belly from a mess-wagon!"

The crowds also amused him — more than he amused them, in fact. Many supercilious promenaders stared at his sombrero and flannel shirt, but he chuckled inwardly at the freakish hats, extra short skirts, and canes which many

of the women affected, and the bored insolence and tiny lap-dogs of the passengers in the motor-cars.

"If they'd only dress like that girl back there" — he thought of the girl in blue — "she knows how."

Then he stopped at the northwest corner of that congested artery of travel, Forty-second Street, and looked over the heads of the people for a sign of a cigar-store. Since noon he had been searching for one that had a stack of his old, never-failing consoler. There were brands innumerable of cigars and cigarettes and smoking-tobacco, but no Silver Star plug.

"We need men — America is in this war to a finish . . ."

Clear and ringing the words floated over the street, and the old veteran looked across the crowds and saw the uniformed speaker on the pedestal near the Library steps. It was like the smoke of battle to an old war-horse. He crossed the street.

The uniform of the speaker was foreign and there was a red scar where a bullet had grazed his temple, adding a distinction rather than a disfigurement, but that ruddy face and those brown eyes were familiar — of course they were.

"For the luv' o' Mike, if it ain't the kid!"

"Will you let the Frenchmen and the English Tommy fight your battles? It is up to every one of us. It means *you* — and *you* — and *you.*" The little swagger-stick, with the earnest, bright eye behind it, again travelled from face to face. "Who'll be the first to volunteer?"

The crowd had been interested and momentarily thrilled, but none responded. Within hearing of his voice there must have been at least fifteen hundred crowding on Fifth Avenue and around the corner on Forty-second Street. From his pedestal Garry studied them. "Why, they're dead," he said. "What's the matter with 'em?"

Deep in his heart he had felt every word he had uttered. He knew what war was and he knew how near the Germans were to winning then — he could not understand the indifference of the crowd.

Of course, as he looked down on them, he saw scowling pro-German faces, a long-haired Socialist or two, stolid foreigners, and weak, anæmic youths in clothes which flashily imitated the Fifth Avenue fashions, although they were purchased in cheaper Broadway shops. They

chewed gum steadily and gazed at him in the superior, condescending way they would have judged a try-out at a vaudeville matinée. He was n't surprised that *they* did n't step forward — but there were hundreds of others, clean-cut, decent Americans, good fathers and sons, square and courageous — what was the matter?

"They are asleep — they don't understand — they *don't understand.* God help them if they don't wake up before it is too late!"

Just as he said this to himself, one of the anæmic, flat-chested youths with belted coats smilingly said to his companion: —

"What's this war in my young life? Come on, he's a nut."

And Garry caught it and called after them inelegantly, but in righteous anger: —

"Yes, beat it — just as fast as you can. We don't want you yellow streaks. We want men, *red-blooded men.* Who'll volunteer?"

The crowd laughed and cheered, but none moved towards the front except two youngsters of about seventeen, who ascended the steps, and Garry clapped each on the shoulder: —

"That's the stuff — "

"They're not eighteen," he said in an aside to a soldier, although they were assuring the

recruiting sergeant that they were. "But it's a white man's lie."

"Come on, boys, who'll be next to do the decent thing?"

Two more followed. Then there was a pause and the crowd began to drift away.

Old Jeff mounted the steps.

"How 'll I do, boy?"

Garry's jaw dropped — then the old, dazzling smile.

"Jeff — You *old Son-of-a-Gun — Gosh!* but it's good to see you!"

Garry's wounded shoulder was almost put out of commission by the bear-hug his old bunkie gave him.

"But this ain't enlistin', Garry. Hurry, I want to sign — it may start something in that crowd of dead ones."

But the crowd had melted away — they had had their thrills and their curiosity was satisfied — a good show and no admission charged. It was n't so easy to get recruits at first in April, 1917.

"You're too old, Jeff. They don't want men of fifty yet. I need a private secretary. How'd you like the job?"

The veteran spread out his lean, leathery hands.

"Now, would n't that be a pretty picture, — these hands a-punchin' them ladylike little buttons like the piano-player back in Monte's saloon — and a-writin', 'Dear Sir' and 'Dear Madam'? Better give me a job crankin' a little ole machine gun, boy."

Despite his objections, later that afternoon, the old soldier was sitting on the one and only chair in Garry's office, punching away at the keys of the second-hand typewriter more laboriously even than Garry with his wounded arm, and getting all tangled up with the ribbon, the shifts, and the margins, to the huge glee of himself and his new "boss," who was looking over his shoulder.

"I handle this here machine about like a tenderfoot would that old outlaw Satan — do you remember that cayuse, Garry?"

But Garry did n't answer him, for he was looking at a calendar on the wall — a cheap advertising calendar. There was a girl smiling above the rows of black figures and she had blue eyes — oh, infinitely less beautiful than those others — but they set him thinking . . .

CHAPTER VI

BEHIND THOSE EYES

THE owner of those eyes, at the selfsame moment when Garry was gazing at the advertising calendar, was engaged in that very frequently performed rite of Fashion's altar, powdering her nose in front of the mirror. The nose was beautifully chiselled, almost aristocratically so, — a little bit short, oh, ever so little, with a trace of pride in the nostrils, showing a fineness of pedigree. But there was also a very slight tilt to that nose, harking back to some far-off Celtic ancestor, perhaps, which made its proud beauty adorably human.

Just now there was a troubled look about the grey-blue eyes which had captured Garry. "Idle rich — idle rich" — the taunts kept buzzing in her ears like so many pestilential mosquitoes. And the powder-puff stopped midway between the box and the end of the nose; suddenly she jammed the offending little weapon into the celluloid, donned the coat of her light-blue suit, pinned on her hat, and started downstairs.

Helen Waldron had not lived long in New

York. Her home for the first twenty of her twenty-four years had been in the prosperous Middle-Western metropolis of Cleveland. Her father, Thomas Waldron, long before she could remember, had been a foreman in an iron foundry, but some inventive skill, his indefatigable industry, and a shrewd bargaining instinct which his Connecticut ancestors had bequeathed him, had brought him some means and a share in the foundry at thirty. Step by step his wealth and power grew, till at forty he was one of the famous iron magnates of the Middle West, the husband of Eleanor Crittenden, a gently bred woman of one of the older families of the city, practically owner of the largest bank in Cleveland, director in many other enterprises, and possessor of one of those crude mausoleums on Euclid Avenue, which good Clevelanders in the late nineties used to consider the acme of architectural art. Later came a home in much better taste, a Colonial dwelling in the beautiful suburbs, and in 1913 their removal to New York City, where they rented their present home, a handsome grey-stone structure on Sixty-second Street, just off Fifth Avenue. Mrs. Waldron had not been happy, for it had not been a love match. She had married simply to please her parents

when their fortunes were very low, and her husband's increasing absorption in business had widened the rift. But she had found much of happiness in her two children, and when she died she left with Helen a very precious memory. The girl's air of breeding and beauty were so much like her mother's. From her father she had inherited a fund of common-sense and considerable executive skill, which she had never had any chance as yet to demonstrate.

As Helen came down the stairs, the butler was just ushering her father in. He greeted her casually, receiving almost indifferently the kiss which she placed on his cheek, and chilling for the ten thousandth time her naturally warm affection.

The girl stood in the doorway as he settled himself on a divan in the library and glanced at the stock reports. The library lamp revealed a care-worn and rather bitter expression on his well-moulded but sharp features and thin-lipped mouth. His eye was restless, and he kept nervously rubbing his thumb back and forth against the other four fingers of his hand and constantly shifted his position, although the light fell fairly on the printed page.

As she stood watching him she knit her brows,

bit the corner of her lip a little, and shook her head, then left the house. Just then a smart, gay-colored roadster of the very newest sport model raced up to the curb, recklessly driven, and stopped short.

From it stepped, or rather jumped, a girl, bubbling over with youth and the spring-time — her sister Bettina, or "Betty" as every one called her. She was eighteen and much shorter than Helen — really only an inch or an inch and a half over five feet. And she was much darker. The curls of her black hair, bobbed in the fashion Mrs. Castle has made so popular, danced about her brown fur collar. Her features were even more perfectly chiselled than Helen's, though not more beautiful — the complexion olive with the dull pink one sees in a ripening peach. But the bright black eyes sparkled and danced in mirth. She usually ran or skipped, or stood first on one little foot, then on the other. The eyes were never still and she was never still. She was a lovable, precious little tomboy. Strangely contrasted the two sisters; it would have taken more than a Paris to decide which deserved the famous apple.

Betty ran to Helen and threw her arms around her — she was always hugging some-

thing, not from insincerity, or design, but just because she was such an affectionate little kitten.

"Hello, Nell — whither away?"

"Hello, dear — to the Plaza. I have an appointment with some of the girls. It seems a shame to spend such a lovely afternoon indoors. Is n't it *perfect?*"

"Have you got to keep it?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but it's an awful bore," she answered.

"Well, let Jim drive you up, anyway, and we'll stop for you in half an hour and take you for a spin up Riverside — we'll have time. Is n't his new roadster a darling?"

"It surely is — but where did you get that awful color, Jimmy?" Helen called to the youth who was fussing with the hood, not because anything was wrong, but just because he could n't help playing with his new toy.

"Greetings, Helen," he called. "Oh, I just had my spring hair-cut and the kind barber saved the clippings and I mixed 'em with water in a barrel and painted the boat. How do you like the result?"

"Wonderful, Jimmy, wonderful," Helen said, cocking her head on one side and gazing at the

bright red coat of the car and the brick-red thatch of the freckled-faced, merry boy beside it.

But Betty swung on the run-board and patted the boy's "brick top" and called to her sister: —

"His hair *is* a pretty color. Anyway, I like it, and don't you kid him about it either."

Everybody liked Jimmy — his classmates at Princeton, the men in the office, the girls in general — and Betty — well, she was only eighteen, but she was never happier than when dancing with Jimmy, or swimming with Jimmy, or driving in that new car with Jimmy. Almost every sentence she uttered had Jimmy for its subject — Jimmy says this, Jimmy does that, etc., etc. He was certainly King in her little world.

They dropped Helen at the Plaza, and the group at the table she joined thought her unusually quiet that afternoon. After the warm beauty of the spring day, the make-ups, the strained voices, the gossip, the cigarettes, the cocktails of the fashionable crowd, bored her to distraction.

"It's all so unwholesome," she said; and then again those words she had heard at the Library from that boyish, ruddy-faced soldier with the eager, brown eyes, and the scar on his temple,

sang themselves over and over in her mind till she dropped her tea and muffins, and excusing herself with some hastily muttered apologies, went to a telephone booth and ordered her car brought to the hotel.

When it came she dismissed the chauffeur and as rapidly as the traffic policeman would allow, she sped through the Park and over to the Drive. She drove with practised skill. In fact, the girl did everything in an athletic way well. Her body was really a beautiful thing — all velvet and steel — and whether she golfed, swam, or even walked, it was a delight to watch her.

The sun was very warm this afternoon, and the banks sloping to the Hudson showed the tender green of spring. Beyond Grant's Tomb the silver-blue loveliness of the river curved past the Highlands far in the distance. And in the calm beauty of the scene, noble aspirations flooded her soul — a way they have with us mortals in spring-time. But the girl meant them all.

"He was right," she said to herself. "I am rich and I am idle — but I'm going to help."

CHAPTER VII

IN THE BALCONY

In those days official Washington had not yet outraged the jovial souls of Broadway with its fuel edict, and the far-famed lights were doing quite all that was expected of them when Garry Owen with Henry Wagner entered a gay restaurant at the corner of one of the "Splendid Idle Forties."

There had been a great demand for Garry's thrilling recruiting appeals all over the city, and this was his first holiday in the month following the Library speech. Jeff had gone on a visit to some old friends, and Henry Wagner had volunteered to show the little soldier the ideal way to spend an off-evening in New York.

Every table was filled and fully twoscore couples waited impatiently in the lobby, behind the heavy silken rope that barred their entrance. Now, Henry prided himself on his skill as a lobster-palace pilot and a high-sign to the head-waiter was made good with a greenback. This acted as a sort of magic shoe-horn, deftly slipping them between the crowded tables

to a choice one by the balcony from which the card "Reserved" was hastily whisked.

Over the gilt railing they gazed on the polished floor, where, under the blaze of light shining from the lavishly gilt ceiling, couples twisted back and forth in that rhythmic twitching exercise they call the one-step.

The dance and the short encore over, into the halo of the spotlight pranced a berouged fairy with a liberal bosom always threatening to burst its filmy bonds. Eyes, fingers, shoulders, and hips snapped as she sang in a shredded soprano one of those melodies which broadened people's geographical knowledge a year or so ago. Very instructive, their chief vice was their sectionalism. The places usually favored were south of the Mason and Dixon Line. There was an occasional excursion to California, but whoever heard a song about New Jersey or Rhode Island? In fact, some envious critics of the Administration went so far as to assert that these songs influenced the President's appointments, for in his customary weekly visits to the theatre he would one night hear the virtues of some fair Southern State so entrancingly sung that he would then and there determine that only so charming a locality could produce a man

fit for the new Supreme Court vacancy. The following week, the glories of a neighboring commonwealth would be extolled and the problem of that much-discussed Cabinet position would be delightfully solved.

But the course of instruction of this cabaret had just taken a wider cultural range, and in the next number the spotlight shone on a swaying group of brown-dyed maidens in knee-length seaweed, officially from Honolulu, but chiefly from Grand Street, New York, and North Clark, Chicago, who taught the lovers of jazz and bubbles the fascinating customs and ethnology of Hawaii.

Then the strains of "Dixie" and all the good folk from Passaic and Yonkers and Brooklyn wildly applauded.

It amused Garry for a while, then he looked decidedly bored.

"Very interesting to look at for an hour — about once in five years," he said. "I've been sizing up that bunch and I can't make out many real men on the floor. Their clothes would pass inspection all right. They could sure 'buck for orderly' at a Fashion parade, but I don't believe one of those fellows could stay five seconds on a bad-acting horse, and in a pinch, God help

a man if he had to depend on them — I'd rather have old Jeff with me than the whole outfit."

"Oh, there's a gangster or two down there that could put up a pretty good fight," his companion answered. "You see that fellow — rather thin, dark and good-looking, with that tall, blue-eyed blonde — the one in the light-blue dress, with silver trimmings — ends at the waist — see her — well, you can bet more'n a buffalo nickel that he could put up a pretty stiff fight."

"Yes — Greaser fashion — with a knife or a gun — when you're looking the other way," returned Garry. "But I'd rather be in a Border dance-hall, if you want this sort of thing. It's bad, maybe, and pretty raw, but it's red-blooded, at least. Look at that young girl over there, and the one at the next table — I'll bet they come from good families — but one of 'em's smeared the war-paint on pretty thick. I'd like to take her out to Montana or Wyoming — she would n't need paint on her cheeks then. The pasty-faced young fellow with the other girl — he's just kidded her into taking a cocktail. He ought to go in the Army. He's poor material, but it might make a man of him."

"Oh, let 'em have a good time — it's harmless enough — don't be a kill-joy, Garry!"

"Never mind the kill-joy part — you know it is n't the real stuff; of course, I'm pretty rough on 'em — there *are* a few regular people here besides you and me," he added with a grin, "but not many. Look over there — that fellow buying wine. He comes from Grand Rapids, he's a furniture man, and the girls with him are models from some dressmaking place. Yes, I got all that from their buzz-buzz. He's spent thirty dollars for wine and as much again for the food they're guzzling. And people are starving by the hundred thousand across the sea. It is n't a square deal, in these times, anyway."

Further conversation was shattered by that latest musical invention, the jazz band, discovered by some Burbank of Tin-Pan Alley, as they call the street where these melody guerillas congregate. The idea of the jazz band was originally secured by hiring a lusty Scotch band of bag-pipers, stationing them in the Chicago stock-yards and ordering them to pipe up just as hog-killing commenced. A car-load of famished mules loudly calling for food was shunted on the side-track near by at the same time and added a few grace notes to the harmony.

A couple sat by the railing on the adjacent side of the balcony, so situated that Garry

could look across the open space, full in the face of the man, to whom the waiter, the assistant head-waiter, and occasionally that lordly potentate, the head-waiter himself, paid the most obsequious attention.

"You're not in *their* class, Henry," said Garry, who had noticed with amusement his friend's pride in the exacting of proper service; "he has the brigadier and the chief-of-staff looking after him. I wonder what the honey is — they buzz around like bees in clover."

It was this homage that first attracted Garry's attention, then the personality of the couple themselves. Fifty would have been a safe guess at the man's age; he was large, probably tall, with steel-blue eyes and a handsome face and head that would have been leonine were it not for its slight tendency to squareness. As it was, it was commanding — so much for the first glance. A second or third decided Garry that the air of tolerant good-humor for the world in general was studied.

"That gentleness is phoney; underneath he is as proud and untamed as an outlaw stallion."

A splendid picture his companion made, in a gown of light green below a superb breast-line. He dared the impossible and guessed her age at

thirty-five. There must have been make-up, of course, in this age, but it was so artistically finished that the faint bloom in the cheeks looked quite like Nature's touch. For the rest she seemed all white and gold, with a dazzling skin and the bright yellow of the coiled masses of her luxuriant hair. Chameleon-like, her eyes nearly matched the jewel-set tortoise-shell comb and almost exactly the topaz lavallière at her still firm, white throat. If quick impressions were not totally misleading, she had the heart of the jungle, cuirassed in ice. But that armor thawed occasionally when she glanced at her companion, almost tenderly and appealingly.

"She's fallen for him, all right," said Garry across the table. "But *he's* tired of her."

They barely touched the food, although prepared for them with special care. But the cuisine of this popular place was not world-famous. The elaborateness of the noisy cabaret rather than the food was the bait that lured the not over-fastidious masses.

"They're a fine-looking couple all right," commented Henry, "but they belong over in the swell Madison Avenue hotels and not on Broadway. They don't usually swim in these waters."

"Goldfish out of their pool, you mean," answered Garry.

"Yep, that's it."

"Well, I size them up as carp or sturgeon. If I don't miss my guess they're hunting some other kind of fish. You can find a lot of all kinds that you could call by impolite names right in this pool, but no game fish to speak of."

"You're wrong, Garry, you can't pick 'em — they're the real thing."

"Well, Mr. Wagner, you seem ace-high with that biscuit-shooter over there; pump him."

The waiter, wise in his generation, knew equally well the proper amount of oil to mix in a salad and the proper amount to mix in his answers to customers. Even sooner than Garry he had detected Wagner's pride in displaying his dining-room tyranny. Henry had sent the steak back, had kept the bus-boy on the run with ice for the water and fresh butter — the proper way, he felt, from his experience in the hotels on his route, to stand high in a waiter's esteem. Of course, this was not quite as lofty a pinnacle as he imagined, for waiters, beneath their servile grinning masks, are readers of character; but the head-waiter had O.K.'d Henry by slipping them to that table, so their service had

been excellent, though not as distinguished as that of the couple they had been watching. And quite as unctuous and palatable to Henry as the Russian dressing on the salad at his elbow was the —

"Yes, sir; what can I do for you, sir?"

"Who is that couple over there, George?" Very good form this! — all waiters on his salesman's route were thus addressed.

"The handsome gentleman, second table from the corner, sir, with the lady in green?"

"Yes; do you know them?"

"Yes; I never saw them *here* before, but I used to wait on him at the Ritz-Carlton, sir; it's a Mr. Arnold, sir." (He knew these extra "sirs" would not be wasted on Henry, although they would have annoyed most of the diners at his old place.) "It's a Mr. Frederick Arnold, head of a large insurance company, sir, and director in a good many large enterprises. The lady? I knew her, too — lives at the Gotham, now — used to dine with him there very often. He used to remember me very liberally" — he sighed reminiscently — "he was a *fine* gentleman, sir."

"Damn him, he must have swallowed a jug of maple syrup," muttered Garry to himself, but not aloud, for he was very anxious for all the

information he could get about the strange couple, and the man in particular. Why was he so interested in them? He had been racking his brain for a reason. It was not memory. He could not have seen them before. Perhaps it was a premonition — a "hunch" he called it. But he carefully filed the portrait for future use.

The now properly rewarded waiter left them, and they rose as Henry said: —

"You see I was right, you can't pick 'em."

And Garry answered: —

"Yes, you're some little picker, Henry. You ought to have my job."

The other couple rose at the same time, and Garry threaded his way through the crowded room hurriedly, catching up with them at the cloakroom. But not a word of any significance did he hear, only the name "Hilda" by which the man addressed her, and some inconsequential remark. Once the man glanced searchingly at Garry — then turned away and they entered their limousine.

CHAPTER VIII

SHE LEARNS HIS NAME

Six o'clock of the following day found Helen walking slowly up Madison Avenue after a long session at the Red Cross Workroom. Though he was utterly unconscious of this triumph, which he would have given a great deal to know, she was really Garry's first recruit. The change had not been the flickering swiftness of a movie-conversion, of course, but Helen had been longing for a nobler outlet for her unusual energies, and she was impulsive as well as thorough. Once having fought out the problem in that long drive up Riverside Drive, she had cancelled all but a few of her social engagements and plunged whole-heartedly into this work of mercy, and was also serving efficiently on several committees having in charge other war relief charities of the city.

New York is always undergoing some minor or major operation on almost every section of its great body, and a group of workmen were industriously boring into its vitals at one of the corners Helen passed. A huge poster on a con-

tractor's shed caught her eye — a picture of a soldier in khaki, with a warlike expression on his face, crouching with fixed bayonet as if to spring over the parapet. And underneath the letters announced: —

WAR LECTURE

by

SERGEANT JAMES GARRISON OWEN

COME AND HEAR HIS THRILLING
TALE OF LIFE AND DEATH
IN
NO MAN'S LAND

He will tell you his vivid story and
show you what your son, your
brother, will have to face

CARNEGIE LYCEUM
May 6th, 1917

The colors were garish — it was a crude lithograph, but curiously lifelike.

She looked again. Where had she seen that face before?

Yes — why, of course, it was the speaker on

the Library steps. "Sergeant James Garrison Owen" — it had a rugged, manly sort of sound — like the speaker, she thought.

She entered the store.

"Give me two tickets for to-morrow night, please, — orchestra."

But then: "He looks poor and he's only a sergeant. Probably he needs the money" — then to the saleswoman: "If you don't mind I think I'll change these and take a box — no, not that one — not too near the stage." And she flushed as she thought of their first meeting and the mosquito-like buzzing of those words, "Idle rich — idle rich," sang in her ears.

"Anyway, I'm not so idle now."

After dinner, as she was seated in the library, reading, with eyes that were dimmed a little, those beautiful descriptions of Mr. Britling's grief for his son, a visiting-card, with the name of Mr. Frederick Arnold engraved upon it, was handed her.

Very cordially she welcomed him, for he was suave and entertaining and talked of foreign lands and affairs of State, at home and abroad, in a way that both flattered and fascinated a girl whose horizon, despite her means, had encircled only Cleveland and New York, a sum-

mer resort or two, and one trip to the Coast, and who was very eager to learn of men and things worth while. She liked not only his vast fund of information, but the never-hurried, well-modulated voice with which he dispensed these treasures, and his air of having time to spend on the amenities of life, so different from the nervous, crisp manner that disturbed the poise and stressed the faces of her father and the other business men she knew. Yet he sat side by side with them at many a directors' table, and rumor had it that his interests outmatched most of theirs.

Betty never quite liked him. She made fun of one or two trivial Continental affectations as she called them — the mustache which had ascended slightly at the ends up until a year or so before, the accent of indistinguishable source, and the occasional tendency to exaggeration in his compliments. Strange characteristics for an American business man, she said.

But Betty was girlishly intolerant of all beaux whom she classed as "old duffers," "old" meaning forty as a minimum. And Helen explained that these slight mannerisms came from his education at foreign universities and his long tours later abroad. Anyway, they had almost disap-

peared lately since the trips to Europe had ceased, and his mustache was curbed in the fashion of Americans who still wear mustaches, and altogether he was a commanding, impressive figure.

Though most young women with an eye to the main chance would have anxiously analyzed the attentions of this most eligible bachelor, Helen seldom bothered her head about the existence of any sentimental motives on his part.

If they became too obvious at times, she ignored them with the reflection: "Most men think they have to say these things. So let him get it out of his system."

"A beautiful spring day, my dear Miss Waldron," he began after shaking hands. "And if you will permit me to say so, you look like the very spirit of Spring herself."

"That is a pretty speech, but I'm afraid I don't look anything quite like that. I'm too tired and bedraggled. I've been very busy all day at the Red Cross Workroom. It seems so little to do, when one thinks of all the sacrifices they are making in France. I feel pretty remorseful over all the time I've wasted in silly social pleasures since I came from Cleveland. I must have been asleep or wicked."

"Ah, but you do not see yourself as others can."

"One sees more clearly than outsiders the faults within themselves. But I do want to go to France. Do you know of any way that I can help?"

"Yes, by staying right here at home. There's plenty to do. Besides, we need you — very much."

But she steered the conversation away from the dangerous, uncharted sea of personalities to safer waters.

"I'm going to violate the laws of hospitality and hold you up," and she playfully held, with the point towards him, a curiously carved paper-cutter, at the same time producing a document. "That's the line you sign on — those poor Belgian babies need it so. How can people who call themselves civilized be so cruel!"

"Anything you wish, my dear lady." And taking his fountain pen and check-book he signed his name and handed her a check for five hundred dollars.

"Oh, if all Americans were only as generous as you! Appeals to you *never* go unanswered. Thank you so much."

She held her hand towards him. He chose

to interpret the action sentimentally and was about to say something significantly when another caller was ushered in — the handsome, exquisitely gowned Mrs. Hilda Rintelen. The tones of her voice as she greeted Helen were rich, throaty, and gracious.

"Have you met Mr. Arnold, Mrs. Rintelen?"

"Oh, yes; I have had the honor of meeting Mr. Arnold once or twice before."

As they leaned back in the comfortable chairs of the room with its rich dark tones, the contrast between the two women was striking — Mrs. Rintelen's beauty was the brilliance of the unshaded incandescent light, Helen's loveliness like indirect illumination, the same power burning there, but how infinitely soft and reposeful its glow.

For a quarter-hour they chatted of the usual things — the coming charity bazaar, Hoover, the new show Ned Wayburn was putting on atop the Century, the Piping Rock Hunt, and the general inefficiency of servants.

During the whole conversation, even when her eyes were not fixed on him, Hilda Rintelen seemed to be watching Arnold, now apparently encouraging and again curbing his attentions to the girl.

The necessary small-talk period past, Helen turned to Mrs. Rintelen: —

"I've just been playing bandit and held up Mr. Arnold. Now I have *you* in my power and I'm going to make you both come to Carnegie Hall to-morrow night and sit in my box. A young American is going to speak. Now, don't plead any engagements. If you've made any, just break them. He could n't wait for us to declare war but enlisted in the British Army after the Lusitania was sunk. Was n't that glorious?"

Both Mrs. Rintelen and Mr. Arnold agreed that it was glorious, and Helen again admonished them: —

"Be sure and be on hand, for he must n't have a single empty seat. I'm sorry I can't send my car for you, as I sold it last week. I'm using another make, — the Metropolitan; upkeep is cheaper, it only costs a nickel for one block or ten miles."

They both looked puzzled and annoyed at her sacrifice, and she did not see fit to explain that the money thus secured had gone to the Fatherless Children of France Fund in which she had become so much interested recently.

Then Mrs. Rintelen addressed the man: —

"Have you heard the news? Miss Waldron's father has just been appointed to that much-discussed position in the War Department?"

This was said in the light conversational tone of one making an announcement that would please a third in the party, but the eyes seemed to flash a deeper significance.

"Ah, that *is* interesting. Your father is an able man, a very able man, Miss Waldron, and deserves the appointment. Is he home? I would like very much to congratulate him."

Mrs. Rintelen looked relieved when he took the cue and left the room.

In spite of his recent triumph there was a harassed, tired look about Waldron's face as Arnold was shown to his study and shook hands with him, so the latter did not press the acquaintance at the time, but after a few gracious sentences diplomatically took his departure.

And a very few seconds later Mrs. Rintelen murmured her good-bye and left the house.

Next morning at his office in the Liberty Insurance Company Mr. Arnold directed his assistant to secure a fresh financial report on Thomas J. Waldron.

CHAPTER IX

HE LEARNS HER NAME

It was a big night for Garry. During the past month he had been speaking in clubs and churches in the Metropolitan district and had been so successful that a mass meeting in the big auditorium had been arranged for him. The public had heard hosts of returned soldiers, but none quite like Sergeant Owen. He told his story simply, but in a new way — such a breezy, unconventional, sometimes slangy, but thoroughly American, way that audiences everywhere were both amused and intensely thrilled.

He was very nervous to-night and paced up and down the dressing-room in his uniform, almost snapping his swagger-stick in his impatience.

"Easy, now, boy, easy there — don't lose your nerve," said Old Jeff, who had just returned from looking through a crack at the audience. "There's a big house out there — but you can hold 'em. Old Grape-Juice Bill will sure expire with envy when he reads the morning papers."

But his manager ended Garry's agony by summoning him to the platform. Once there his embarrassment vanished.

There were five in Helen's box — Helen and Betty, and inevitable red-haired Jimmy, Arnold, and Mrs. Rintelen.

The sturdy, stocky figure stood in front of the footlight glare and talked to that sea of faces, swaying them as one man, now telling in simple but eloquent word-pictures of the agony of the boys in No Man's Land, now of the humor of Pat and Jock, whom he imitated with irresistibly funny pantomime.

He had had no education. Since fourteen he had been around the world. He was a soldier of fortune, or, as he better expressed it, "I don't know much about books and never had much schooling — I had so many dates to keep around the world." But to-night he was showing two surprising gifts — one of perfectly visualizing for others what he had lived and seen, and the other, strangely enough, the born showman's instinct. And yet he was thoroughly sincere.

Just then he showed this instinct, for switching suddenly from a description of an intense bombardment, he began to tell the audience of the little inhabitants of Tommy's shirt — the

cooties. Now, other soldier lecturers had neglected mentioning this very pertinent phase of soldier life or touched on it very hastily and dignifiedly to avoid hurting squeamish people's feelings. But Garry knew better — it was one of his original ways. Ask any vaudeville magnate and he will tell you that Garry was right — that perfectly fine people who lead perfectly nice lives roar every time a ham-actor says "Damn" or "Hell" on the stage. It's a sure laugh-getter. There's a little of the primitive in the make-up of the first citizens of Metuchen, New Jersey, and Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and Brazil, Indiana, and eminently respectable people like to be a little wild for one awful moment when that little cuss word comes fairly sizzling over the footlights. It never fails. So Garry gave them another delicious shock when he told them of these little things that should not be mentioned in polite society. With such gusto and mischief he told of the shirt-hunts, you could almost hear the little enemies of the soldier crack beneath Tommy Atkins's thumb. It was worth the price of admission to see on the faces of the audience the first shock, the gradual grins, and then hear the ripple of amusement that spread from row A orchestra to Q in the

peanut gallery, and swelled at last into a great roar of laughter.

Then the boy swung back to more serious things and lined up a row of chairs to illustrate the trenches and the fire-step. The audience, catching its breath, thought they were in Flanders, not in Fifty-seventh Street, Manhattan, so perfect was the description.

"Isn't he a dear?" whispered Betty, clutching Jimmy's arm, her eyes bright with excitement.

"He's a pippin!" Jimmy answered, almost as excitedly in his boy's way.

Helen said not a word, but her eyes never left the speaker's face. She sat there motionless, but those eyes were very eloquent and she was saying over and over to herself: "Oh! I must help, I *must* help, in some real way!"

As for Arnold and Mrs. Rintelen, they did not seem quite as touched by the pathos as the younger folk, although they always affected an attitude of interest. However, when Betty appealed to them, Arnold said: "A very clever young man, a very clever young man!"

Mrs. Rintelen tilted forward her gorgeously aigret-plumed head, her rich opera cloak slipping off one shoulder, and patted her shoulder: "He is wonderful, my dear child, wonderful!"

Arnold was sitting in a chair near the door of the box when a tap came — then another — and another. He opened it almost as if this were a signal he had awaited. He stepped out into the passageway. A messenger handed him a note — then disappeared. It was dark in the corridor and, after looking to see that no one was near, Arnold flashed his pocket electric lamp and read the message.

Now, Old Jeff had never been in a hall quite like this. It was quite different from all the false-front "opry" houses of the tank towns and he had been exploring it from cellar to dome. He was just coming around the curve of the corridor when he saw the curious actions of the stranger. Jeff stumbled. Arnold turned and then pocketing the envelope, reëntered the box.

But Jeff caught a glimpse of the stranger's face and stowed it away in a pigeon-hole of his memory for future use.

"I don't know much about him, but I don't like the way he parts his hair," was the illogical excuse he gave himself — that is, for the present.

A storm of applause that sounded first like rifle-fire, then swelled in volume till it seemed

as if a mighty ocean surf were pounding on some beach, brought Jeff quickly back to the orchestra floor in time to hear Garry make his appeal for the Smokes Fund for the "Sammies," which an enterprising New York evening newspaper had started that week. The boy knew what smokes meant. He had been sorely wounded and craved a fag bitterly when there were none to be had. And he told them in words that audience never forgot of the solace that bit of paper and tobacco brought to a dying Canadian soldier.

"Do they want smokes!" he said. "Does a dying man long for water — Good God, do they want them!"

Then he passed a basket down the aisles with a bright smile on his magnetic face and a running fire of comment that brought forth shouts of laughter, and made every one dig deep in trousers pockets or vanity-bag as the case might be.

"Get your change in heaven," he said to one man who seemed to expect something back from a bill.

"That'll help bust up the firm of Me und Gott," to another.

And to one who had contributed a yellow-back he called, holding it up: —

"That's the stuff! Nothing yellow about the American people."

And then he came below the box where Helen sat. She tossed a note into the basket. He looked up — those blue eyes again. He almost dropped the basket in panic just as he had his swagger-stick that memorable day on the Library steps.

Then his eyes clashed with Arnold's. There was instant recognition and mutual antagonism. Yes, he was the man whom he had studied so carefully in the restaurant. And with him was the same striking-looking woman. Why were they with her? Helen noticed a bit of the by-play. It worried her strangely. Now, Arnold had never refused her appeal for charities, either peace or war, yet he had not contributed now. Perhaps he was not pleased with her very evident interest in the speaker.

"And won't you give something? — you are always so generous," she appealed to him. Quickly recovering, he tossed a bill of large denomination into the basket. Garry felt like tearing it in two when he reached his dressing-room.

"He's dangerous. But never mind — maybe I'm sore because he's with the girl — that means a couple of hundred smokes for the boys and

God knows they need it — But what's he doing with *her?*"

The dressing-room was crowded with society women, who chattered and gushed; reporters who rapid-fired questions about the war; old comrades from regiments in which he had served, or ships on which he had sailed, and who slapped him on the back and felt very proud of the acquaintance.

But the greetings of this crowd of admirers were feeble compared to the admiration of a voluble Frenchwoman who entered just then.

Rushing up to Garry, she made him give a vivid demonstration of the old Biblical injunction of turning the other cheek. For placing one hand under each cheek she kissed him first on one, then the other, and seemed about to repeat the performance *ad infinitum.*

— — — — — — — — — — (representing a flow of French phrases quite unintelligible to Garry and Jeff, but perfectly proper terms of endearment, admiration, and gratitude for an American who had fought for her beloved France.)

Salute.

— — — — —

Another.

— — — — —

And another.

— — — — — — etc., etc.

Garry endured the salvo of kisses patiently, for he had sojourned in France long enough to understand French customs and knew how splendidly they back up their demonstrations with their deeds. Besides, he noticed that she wore black, and he knew that meant some brave Poilu lying under a little wooden cross in Northern France. (Later on he found that there were four of these little crosses over her dear ones and that the poor soul had become demented from grief.)

But he noticed Jeff standing by, watching his discomfiture with a diabolical grin. So a little devil entered into the boy's head and he could n't help saying as soon as he could catch his breath between the kisses: —

"Pardon me — madame — a mistake — over there is — the *real* hero — Monsieur Blake — he has killed at least ten thousand Germans!"

"Ah — you wonderful Americans!!" And the salvo fell on Jeff.

Holding up his hands he protested: —

"No, ma'am, it's a mistake — I never did."

"Ah! you are a great hero — you are also ver' modest —"

Jeff was routed completely. Backing to the door, he hurried down the stairway, through the exit, and around to Seventh Avenue, where he found a bar and got his courage and equanimity back gradually. As he poured a full five of his fingers (and they were huge fingers too) from the bottle on the mahogany he mused: "I was sure intendin' to enlist — but if that's what we are to get in France — old General William Tecumseh Sherman was n't over-statin' the case any."

In fifteen minutes he was sufficiently fortified to return to the dressing-room, but he made his way there cautiously, *very cautiously*. He found the room deserted now, save for Garry, who was sitting, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees and a beatific smile on his face, reading a note hastily pencilled. This is what it said: —

DEAR MR. OWEN: —

If you come to the Red Cross Headquarters on Madison Avenue and Thirty-first Street, I will have my subscription for the Smokes Fund ready. I want to help all I can.

With best wishes for success in your wonderful work —

Yes, there it was — her name: —

HELEN WALDRON

It was a big night for Garry.

Jeff noticed Garry's eagerness when he read the note, and even at a distance that note was unmistakably feminine. He had had a double dose of the feminine already that night and he looked at the note as suspiciously as a bronco would gaze at a lariat.

No, Garry did n't get much sympathy from Jeff, but the latter probably would n't have said what he did if he had known that the missive came from the girl in blue whom he had met so informally at Forty-fifth Street and Fifth Avenue the day he reached town.

"You ought to go up against a stone wall — lettin' some designin' female rope and brand and hog-tie you like that."

Now, Garry's manner was usually modest and he had a natural chivalry when speaking to women, but he was a trooper, and trooper's language is — well, trooper's language, so, as he hurled a heavy shoe at Jeff's head, he said: —

"Get the hell out o' here!"

Four years ago this could not have been recorded without expurgatory dashes, but all the bookshops and railroad news-stands in the country display these days the brimstone jackets of a thousand war books, most of them greet-

ing us with sub-titles composed of expletives such as "He Lived in Hell, Back with a Smile," "Over the Top and Give 'em Hell," etc., etc. Hence the public by this time must be sufficiently hardened to bear the truth.

So Garry is quoted exactly.

But, of course, he said it with a grin.

Anyway, as he fell asleep that night, he felt sure that it had been a very successful night for him. He had learned her name and knew where to find her.

CHAPTER X

SOMETIMES IT TAKES COURAGE

THE boy was busy at rallies all the next day, and at the close of a speech in a Forty-fourth Street theatre he received a very flattering invitation from a lady, whose name is written large in the Blue Books, and whose husband's name is one to conjure with in Wall Street. But, as Jeff said, "he ducked them all" and escaped as quickly as he could to the street and walked hastily over to Madison Avenue. When he reached Thirty-first Street he stood on the opposite corner a moment. The windows of the Red Cross Workroom across the street were spacious, and through them he could see the busy women with their miles of coiled yarn and stocking-machines.

Garry had medals to show for his year and a half in Flanders (although, to do him justice, he rarely showed them), but it was fully five minutes before he could summon up sufficient courage to start across that street — and then he walked past the door. Three times he repeated the performance — then he set his teeth,

determined to make it this time. So he walked quickly, with that jerky, bow-legged cavalryman's stride of his, to the door.

At last he made it and was safe across the threshold — then he stood stock-still. To a helpless man those mazes of yarn were worse than barbed wire. They would surely trap his erring feet and leave him a prey to something more deadly than TNT — the high explosive with which a woman's smile is always charged.

Luckily Helen emerged from a crowd of women and came forward with a sheaf of papers in her hand to consult with a committeeman, or rather committeewoman, who sat at a desk in the corner. The girl wore a very plain suit. She had always dressed in perfect taste, but she dressed more quietly than ever these days, partly because of a certain humility she had felt ever since that day she heard those words at the Library steps, and partly because she wanted to make other workers, less fortunate than she, feel perfectly at home. However, the boy thought the blue serge dress and white satin collar richer raiment than any queen's.

Curiously enough, Helen also felt a queer little trepidation inside, but with woman's skill in all emotional situations, she concealed this

and came forward. A hand-clasp betrays character or lack of it more clearly than the palm to the most skilled palmist. Indecision, treachery, lust, and selfishness are often registered there. But her friends always liked Helen's hand-clasp, — it was so frank and friendly, strong and vital. So all at once Garry felt at ease, as if he had known her all his life.

"I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Owen. It's nice of you to come so soon."

Then, to avoid personalities, she led him to a corner where there were two chairs and took from her blouse a check.

Garry's eyes opened. It was for three hundred dollars.

"Thank you, Miss Waldron; all I can say is that you're a regular American girl. Some of those boys out there will thank you in the right way. If you could only see them when they're clicking casualties fast and are all shot up! Those smokes will sure look good to them then."

How bright and eager his eyes were, she thought. His grammar was not always perfect; the pattern of shirt and tie might seem a little crude to the very fastidious, and the voice was a little rough at times, but it had a pleasant and thoroughly sincere note. He was *sound*.

"There are lots of old women and some parsons that don't believe in smoking. Guess they think sending 'em smokes corrupts their morals. I have n't much use for any one who would grudge the boys one of their few comforts."

"It's little enough to do for the men who are giving up everything for us." Helen was not of the weepy sort of women, but there was a trace of moisture in her eyes. Then she went on with a little embarrassment: —

"I'm going to make a confession, Mr. Owen. I could have given you the check last night, but I asked you to come — because I wanted to thank you personally for what you've done for me."

"*I've* done something for *you!*" His face flushed slightly, and then he paused.

"Yes, you have done a lot for me. You remember one day you spoke at the Library steps and I was driving by, and I heard you — and you said something about 'the idle rich' — every word of it was true."

"But, Miss Waldron, I did n't mean *you*," he stammered out in confusion.

"Well, the shoe fitted, anyway. I *have* money — and I was *idle* — not viciously idle," she went on hurriedly, "but it was a useless sort of

life at best. You taught me *the things that count.*"

Garry could not turn pretty phrases, but no courtier could have paid her finer tribute:—

"Miss Waldron, I'm sure you're not fair to yourself. I know you're everything that's good."

"No — I *was* selfish; but I'm trying my best to help now. And oh, please let me know if I can help you and your work in any way."

She rose, not because she would not have liked to talk longer with this young soldier with the rugged but attractive face and bright smile, but woman-like she was a little afraid that he might think her forward.

"And now I must get to work. You will let me know if I can help in any way, won't you?"

"You bet I will," he said, and his heart went with the reply and his warm hand-clasp as he said "Good-bye."

He was busy later that afternoon in front of his boarding-house trying to devise some way of seeing her *very soon.* To be sure he might have called, but she was busy at the Workroom all day and he was scheduled to speak almost every night, and besides, he did n't relish the idea of formal calls in homes on Fifth Avenue, or just off it.

His cogitations were not apparent, and they were doubly concealed by the uplifted black hood of the little car into whose works he was solemnly peering. It was only one of those myriad little black enamelled vehicles, in which one half the world and their wives and offspring ride to-day, and which if linked together would form a chain belt around the world, with never a link missing, not even in the desert of Sahara. It was to Garry's credit, by the way, that he had chosen a modest "Tin Lizzie," when, with the rich returns from his well-attended lectures, he might have had a much more luxurious vehicle with a chauffeur to boot. But he had seen too many wounded Tommies on the Somme, and in Flanders too many babies with little pipe-stem legs and hollow, pleading eyes, for any such indulgence. Most of his earnings helped to keep the Red Cross where it belongs, and always has been — on the firing-line.

So he rode in the little "Tin Lizzie."

Jeff came up as he was gazing in apparent absorption into the whirring think-tank of the little car. Now, both of the ex-troopers loved horses, but in the city, a steed being impracticable, Garry had transferred his affection temporarily to said "Tin Lizzie." He curried it,

shod it, petted it, and almost talked to it in endearing terms like a horse. But nothing like that for Jeff! In his firm, very firm opinion, no human being who could show a male birth certificate ought to prefer one of those tin boxes on wheels when there were real live horses to straddle.

Of this opinion Jeff delivered himself rather forcibly to Garry's back, as he himself lazily sat down on the lowest step of the porch, Garry's head still being under the hood while he tinkered and searched for engine trouble — and some scheme to bring about that meeting.

After Garry had finished with his repairs, Jeff pursued his theme from the car, which Garry had finally persuaded him to enter. As they followed their dusty course on the plank road which leads over the Passaic and Hackensack bridges to Essex County, Jeff rattled along with the car: —

"Automobiles have got all the bad traits of hawsses and none of the good ones. There's a fellow named Butts, an old friend of mine — I ran across him the other day. He's struck oil somewhere and gone and taken to himself a wife and a few children and a brand-new shiny car with all sorts of little fixin's on it — a *regular*

automobile, Garry, not a little express wagon on wheels like yours.

"Butts invited me out to his home the other day, and blamed if his little ole car did n't treat him the very same way a cayuse of mine did when he was out West one summer a-visitin' me. You know he used to race hawsses back East and knew everything about 'em, and then some — he admitted that much himself. They were havin' races on the Fourth of July in town and we had a pretty fast pony; he was an ordinary cayuse, but he was sired by a thoroughbred the 'Flying F' outfit had brought from Kentuck.

"Butts allowed he'd ride that hawss. And he rode it all right, lookin' like a little hunched-up monkey — you know how the racin' jockeys sit. In fact, he was the real thing and we all admired to look at him with his little silk cap and stripe-ed little silk coat that looked like a bob-tailed kimony. They done the trick, for they stampeded the other hawsses into the sage-brush, so Buttsey won hands down.

"When he gets to the finish he's feelin' sort o' frolicsome-like and — you know how all Western hawsses are, particular about folks thumbin' or caressin' their withers or necks, due to their havin' been raked by spurs fore and

aft when they was broke. Well, this little ole pony hated it worse than most. Otherways he was a respectable citizen. So when ole Buttsey in his little stripe-ed hat and coat reaches over and, joyful-like over his winnin' the race, slaps the pony on the neck, all of a sudden Mr. Hawss makes a real nice little buck and — you've seen them clowns turn triple somersaults over elephants' backs at Ringlings' circus — Butts outdone 'em. My, how far he broke the record! I counted five somersaults, and they was a heap more, only I closed my eyes and lost the count. You see he was a guest of mine and I was sort of responsible and I did n't noways want to send him home in a coffin. When I opened my eyes he had landed head-first, plumb in a nice feather-bed of cactus. It took him two days to extract the burrs from his scalp and the little silk jacket was scattered all over the desert. Why, all that summer the cow-punchers would think some new kind of pretty-colored flower was a-growin' in the desert and would ride up to it, and after all it would only be a part of that little stripe-ed silk coat of Buttsey's.

"And I was a-laughin' to myself all about this when I went a-ridin' with him out on Long Island the other day, in that brand-new shiny

car. Butts was a-tellin' me all about some things he called 'bumpers' and 'shock-absorbers' he had just fixed on the new car. And I could n't help sayin' to him: 'It's a pity you did n't have some of them bumpers and shock-absorbers when you rode Ole Lightning in that race, Mister Butts.'

"He looked a mite sheepish and says: 'This is the life. You can trust these machines and you can't the bad-actin' animiles you dignify by the name of hawsses in your heathen country.'

"Now, when a man gets to boastin', I always keep quiet, for I know where he's headin', and sooner or later he'll deal me just the cyards I want.

"We rode the sixty miles all right, him a-discoursin' on the beauty of the scenery when he was n't tellin' me of how his Ipecac Eight was a lot better than Jones' Seidlitz Six, and a-callin' my special attenshun to the golf-lynx where I saw Ole Bill Taft engaged in the process of trying to reduce his beef. Think of him, Garry, a-leavin' the cares of State for the terrible pursuit of tryin' to shoot a little camphor ball into a prairie-dog hole. He sure jumped from the fryin'-pan into the fire.

"Well, as I was sayin', Garry, we rode the

sixty miles all right and come back a little saddle-weary and rode up the nice pebbly drive under a fancy bridge on the side of his house, which Mrs. Butts tells me is a port-cashier — all the best people have them, she says. And then we came to the nice little stable Butts had built for his little ole car. I forgot to tell you that car set him back three thousand dollars — not Mex., but good U.S.

"Did I say it was his first long drive? It *was*, and Mrs. Butts on startin' had been a little timid about goin' with him and a-takin' all the children along.

"So everything havin' gone so nice and smooth, when he reaches the little stable he stops, sticks out his chest like a pouter-pigeon, and turns around to Mrs. Butts and all the little Buttses and says, in accents of just pride: 'Well, I guess I'm *some driver!*'

"And Mrs. Butts and all the little Buttses were about to allow that when — you know, Garry, *regular automobiles* (you 've ridden in 'em, have n't you, Garry?) have all sorts of pedals and brakes and clutches and such. Well, somehow, just as ole Buttsey was admittin' he was some driver, his feet and hands got all tangled up in those contraptions and got the

wrong combination. Ole Lightning never did a neater job than that car did. It shot right through the door of the nice new stable and right through the back wall and carried the whole damn wall with it. It was the hospital for Ma Butts and the little Buttses, but *post mortem* for the car. All they can do now is to patch up a little excuse for a car like yours, out of the remains.

"But Ma Butts was game enough — when she came to — to holler from the asparagus bed, as she rubbed her haid: 'Yes, *some driver!*'

"So you see in the hour of victory both car and hawss treated him the same."

When he had finished, Garry cracked a smile. He had n't heard Jeff's story at all, but he had found the idea he wanted.

CHAPTER XI

BY CABLE

He did n't waste much time in trying out the idea. It worked perfectly — time, place, girl, and everything. That was why Helen was helping Garry (at his invitation) in the great Liberty Loan Rally in the McAlpin Ballroom, at which he was a leading speaker. She circulated among the guests, equipped with pencils, blanks, and — those eyes. The latter she seldom used deliberately, at least very rarely for so beautiful a girl, but then this was an exceptional cause — at any rate, they must have done the trick, for the others had quite as much stationery as she and hers was all exhausted while they were still frantically besieging every likely-looking male, some even patriotically offering kisses in exchange for subscriptions. At which strategy Garry paused in his speech and swore internally that he never would attend one of these society functions again.

Garry had two audiences, — the seven hundred odd citizens in their chairs, plus the thirty society belles who were acting as canvassers,

made up the first, the other was the girl who was getting so many loan subscriptions.

"Gee, that guy has lots of pep!" said a little bell-boy who stopped in the door to listen. Garry always had that, but there was an extra amount to-day inspired by that audience of one, whose ears were eagerly drinking in his words while her eyes and hands were busy with the blanks and subscribers. In fact, the chests of the flattered, well-tailored gentlemen who looked into her face, then hastily inscribed their John Hancocks on the lines she designated, would have been deflated an inch or so had they known where her attention really was focussed.

Then two very distinguished-looking people, whom Garry always characterized as "two glooms," disturbed his happiness. Yet Mr. Frederick Arnold and Mrs. Hilda Rintelen were very gracious as they mixed in the audience after the talk was over, and their greetings to him and Helen were very pleasant and courteous.

Garry managed to side-step the gushing society women who cooed over and heroized him, and also cleverly manœuvered Helen through an exit so that he walked home *with* her and *without* Mr. Arnold and Mrs. Rintelen. After they had passed up Thirty-fourth Street and

safely achieved the hurly-burly crossing and were swinging up the gay promenade of Fifth Avenue, Helen spoke of them. After enthusiastically praising them, she actually asked him: —

"They are both just dears, are n't they?"

He checked the sort of answer that telephone companies taboo over the 'phone and said nothing.

She pressed an answer. "You're not very enthusiastic; don't you like them?"

He was tempted to warn her. His suspicions he could n't quite define, yet ever since that evening in the restaurant, for all their wealth and distinction of appearance he had classed them as "phoney." But then he thought, while he carefully considered an answer to her question, he might simply be "sore" because they hovered around the girl. Maybe it was plain jealousy. It was mean to knock a friend's friends, unless he was sure. They had reached the Brick Church — three blocks — before he spoke.

"Oh, maybe they're all right — they sure do some good, for they certainly keep Mr. Tailor and Mrs. Dressmaker from starving."

"Oh, thank you, kind sir," she mocked. Men

were always funny, even the nice ones (and this soldier boy was certainly more than nice) all grow jealous and moody and sullen so easily. But she was a trifle piqued, for, once having accepted a man or a woman as a friend, she was loyal to a fault.

"It's easy to see you don't like them. But they're so generous and helpful. Mrs. Rintelen is an untiring Red Cross worker. And Mr. Arnold always subscribes for any patriotic cause when I ask him. You'll like them better when you get to know them. But let's change the subject."

He felt that they would change the ultimate subway circuit into a skating palace before he would like them, but he followed her lead and they were chatting gayly and happily of other things when they reached the Library corner. Here both were shyly silent at the memories it evoked and the color in her cheeks brightened a little.

At the precise moment in which Helen was so stoutly championing her two friends, four thousand miles away from the crowd that surged up and down Fifth Avenue so calmly enjoying the fresh spring sunshine and, save for a stray thought or two of the battle surging across the

seas, engrossed in their pleasure and prosperity, a group of people with a very different set of thoughts were holding a town meeting. It was a sort of super town meeting, of course, held in one of the ornate council chambers of the palace in Berlin — the All-Highest, the Secretary-Who-Files-Scraps-of-Paper, Count Kultur, and all the War Lords being present. No set of people in the world ever took themselves more seriously than this bombastic, pompous gang of royal and titled cut-throats in spiked helmets and Death's-head shakos. No milk of human kindness nor any humor! The latter quality was wholly left out of the German system. If the German had had a sense of humor, there would have been no war, for humor implies a sense of proportion and the possession of a heart. It would all be such a ridiculous burlesque — if it were not so ghastly.

This afternoon the war party was taking a fall out of the conservatives. It was all a confusion of gesticulating fists and smote palms and shining helmets and top-lofty black shakos hurling a bombardment of heavily weighted invective at the shrinking broadcloth of the conservatives. The submarine question and America's entrance into the war were the chief topics, it

appeared. The gist of it — if flying bits of the "conversaziones" were pieced together — was something like this: —

"It is most astonishing — that the insignificant, idiotic Yankees are their dollar-chasing pursuits neglecting and seem to be about to be accomplishing something. True, we have to the people asserted that the efforts of these American pigs to nothing amount — but that for the stupid people is good to believe. The fact altogether remains that they are preparing a large army. If we do not them so rapidly forestall, we cannot win."

Yes, it was all stupid and funny, but they were in Devil's earnest and diabolically ingenious.

And as a result of all the pow-wow, a little message burned the wires from Germany to Switzerland. Now Arnold and the Liberty Insurance Company had many powerful correspondents abroad, and one of these, a large banking concern in Geneva, somehow got that harmless little message in their possession as it passed through. Thinking perhaps it might help their client in his extensive speculations, they relayed the message, clothed in innocent verbiage, in a very round-about way to America, and finally

it reached the Globe Building in New York City.

This lofty building rises gracefully above the foliage of Madison Square. It has a tall, white tower with a great clock whose face can be seen for many miles. And from its pinnacle at night the rays of a great lantern flash over the city, the river, and the harbor to the Jersey hills.

In a spacious suite of offices on the top floor of the sky-scraper the Liberty Insurance Company transacts its business, and in the innermost sanctuary Frederick Arnold, the head of the concern, sat at his desk when the little cable message reached it, its final destination. The few words were startling; at least, he clenched his fist, pounded the desk, crushed the paper in his hand, and left the office. Yet all the message said, even after decoding, was this: —

Sell all shares Samuel short without delay.

His car conveyed him rapidly to the Waldron home, where he asked, not for Helen, but for Mr. Waldron himself.

As if the scene had been set by the director of some dramatic stock company resorting to an age-old but always effective theatric trick, the ceiling lights were turned off, only the reading-

lamp faintly illuminating the room, and in the shadow sat the master of the house, in the limp attitude of one utterly harassed and almost acknowledging defeat. But this was no mere mummery on his part, it was only too real.

After the customary greetings and the tasting of the refreshment brought by the butler, Arnold set his glass down, and after a little further skirmishing with chat of stocks and the market, at which Waldron visibly shuddered, came rapidly to the point: —

"I have a little proposition for your consideration. You know there's no harm in adding a little to your capital on the side. Now, it would help me in my speculations on the market if from your vantage-point in Washington you could give me a little information — in advance, of course — of any news of importance that —"

Waldron jerked spasmodically to his feet.

"Are you trying to bribe me — why, that's treachery!"

"Sit down, Waldron; look at it in a logical way. No harm will be done. I won't divulge the information you give me. We can each make a nice sum on the side and no one will be the wiser. Be sensible, man."

The man opposite turned paler and almost squirmed and continued the nervous rubbing of the ball of his thumb against the four fingers of his right hand. He tried to speak, his tongue seemed to cleave fast to the roof of his mouth.

"Why — why do you bring such a proposition to me?"

"Well, to be brutally frank, because you need the money — you *must have* the money, and *very soon*."

The haunted man turned and slowly went to the threshold, looked up and down the hall, closed the door, and returning sank into his chair. Even in the dim light his agitation was evident.

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, in my business I have means of securing much valuable inside information, very *inside* information. I happen to know that you lost a small fortune on the market."

"Yes, and it was on that peace tip you gave me, which proved false."

"Be reasonable, Mr. Waldron. I only tried to help you. I also lost considerable on the same tip," he lied glibly. That tip had worked beautifully and had placed Helen's father just where Arnold wanted him. He would prove very

profitable now and later — perhaps helpful if the girl proved obstinate.

"And now, a little extra information I have been lucky enough to gain. You held in trust for your daughters the sum of four hundred thousand dollars which their maternal grandfather left them. Could you produce that *now*, if necessary — or even next week?"

Waldron's head sank on his hands.

"But there's a way out, such an easy way. Just agree to give me a little advance information of the sort I want, from time to time, and there's, well — say five hundred thousand a year" — his voice lingered persuasively on the figure — "in it for you."

Then for a moment Waldron's tempter sat motionless, all the suavity and amiability which usually graced his features gone. His erect, arrogant figure was the personification of sinister power.

At last in the ghost of a voice that seemed to come from some far-off caverns of fear to which his trembling spirit had fled, the other answered: —

"You had better go — now."

In the wavering accent of that last word was ultimate defeat and Arnold knew it.

Rising he bent over him.

"When you come to that decision *you are going to make* — it's inevitable — let me know at once."

Then he left.

CHAPTER XII

THE DRAGON'S LAIR

On that very same evening Mrs. Rintelen received a telephone call. The famous speaker originally engaged for the big meeting of the women's organization, of which she was president, had failed them. The affair was much discussed, socially exclusive, and its success meant a great deal to her, for some reason. Nothing would do but to go at once to Washington, so, hanging up the receiver, she immediately ordered her maid to pack her suitcase and a small travelling-bag, then, unaccompanied, she taxied to the Pennsylvania Station. At the Pullman ticket-window she was informed that on account of the rush to Washington of officers and civilians on war missions bent, there were no berths to be had. She was a woman accustomed to the comforts and luxuries of life, nevertheless she purchased her transportation and rode in a stiff-backed seat of the day-coach to the capital.

Arriving there she drove to the New Willard, and, after removing the marks of travel, telephoned a young diplomatic attaché whom she

knew. In response to her summons he came on the run — slim, with tiny mustache, well-groomed and suave — a perfect tool in her hands.

"I want a card of invitation to Mrs. Sanford's reception to-night," she ordered.

An hour later a messenger delivered the invitation.

Dazzlingly arrayed in sumptuous evening gown and head-dress, she was a conspicuous figure in the fashionable throng that night. It required a little manœuvring to meet Mr. Folly from a certain State in the Middle West, but the meeting accomplished, her fascination and adroitness lured him into a corner of the music-room, which was deserted at the time.

After a little inconsequential but witty chatter about the famous singer who had just entertained them, she said with that subtle flattery of which she was past-mistress: —

"I've wanted to meet you so much, Mr. Folly. I've heard of your wonderful work. We all have heard of it. Our association in New York, 'The Woman Defenders of Peace,' is doing a great work, too, in fighting against this most unjust war. But you could help us so much — won't you?"

The distinguished politician and pacifist thrust his hand in the bosom of his Prince Albert, threw back his pompadoured head, in his best forensic manner, and swallowed the bait, hook, sinker, and all.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Rintelen, I shall be delighted to come and help in this noble cause."

Before parting, Mr. Folly agreed to visit New York at the end of the week.

It had been a fortunate trip. The distinguished statesman would insure the success of that wonderful meeting she had planned and the social *éclat* of the organization for which she had worked so untiringly all the past year.

So, her fish hooked, the lady left next morning for home.

The morning appointed for the famous Mr. Folly's visit came. And Mr. Frederick Arnold sat at his desk in the Globe Building, examining the most important communications in his mail. The room was spacious, resembling the library of a luxurious home rather than an office, and was handsomely furnished with beautiful Oriental rugs and massive mahogany. Near his desk quietly buzzed a ticker, behind him ranged shelves filled with fine books; a famous portrait of Washington, one of Peale's, hung on the wall

opposite a painting of white-robed Columbia, evidently the patron saints of the Company. Between the two pictures hung a map of the United States with innumerable little black crosses marking the agencies of the great concern.

The hands of the great clock in the face of the tower outside recorded ten and the great bells corroborated that hour with their silver chime, when the telephone operator fitted in the plug and announced Mr. Spahn.

Arnold ordered his admittance, and the caller, a well-known banker from the sacred precincts of Wall Street, entered, dropping his weighted-down-with-affairs-of-State manner for an air approaching humility as he stood before the distinguished Mr. Arnold.

At this very moment a well-groomed but shrinking figure left a hotel in Washington, D.C., and, walking hurriedly down Pennsylvania Avenue, veered into a side street and entered a saloon and the telephone-booth.

The bell at Arnold's desk rang.

"Washington on the wire for Mr. Arnold."

He grasped the instrument swiftly.

"Is this Mr. Arnold?"

"Yes; who's speaking?"

Thin and faint came the answer. It was indistinguishable.

"Speak more plainly, I cannot hear you."

For answer there was nothing but a jumble of sounds.

"Louder!" — and Arnold grew impatient. He jammed the hook. "Give me a better connection!" he roared.

It was more successful this time. The voice was still thin and faint, and there were pauses as if the owner were half-paralyzed with some emotion, probably fear.

"Mr. Arnold — this is Thomas J. Smith."

"Yes — yes, Mr. Smith?" and a look of intense interest came over the listener's face. He crouched as if to hear more distinctly.

Again the thin, faint, far-off voice: —

"Increase my insurance policy by twenty-five thousand dollars on September first. Good-bye."

The voice was gone.

Triumphantly Arnold turned to the other and said: —

"Twenty-five thousand troops embark on the first — but they will never reach the trenches."

And then from a cabinet he drew liquor and glasses, and, standing very stiff and straight, they drank.

"To the Fatherland, and the Day when the All-Highest reigns in the New World."

And the other added: —

"That will be a glorious hour for both the Fatherland and you, Count von Arnheim!"

The banker left him still standing there, a smile of arrogance and triumph on his handsome features.

Exit now Frederick Arnold, the American financial king, the suave, ingratiating man of the world, and enter Friedrich von Arnheim, Count of the German Empire, honored above all others by his master in Berlin, and sent to New York as the supreme head of the infinite ramifications of the spy system in both the Americas. Here all loyal subjects of the great empire obeyed him; even the powerful von Bernstorff came obediently at his bidding.

His memory harked back to his first hour of triumph, and even as he thought of it his heels unconsciously clicked together and his hand flew to his forehead in military salute.

The honor had been conferred upon him in one of the large chambers of the palace in Berlin, furnished in the ornate but execrable Wilhelmstrasse taste. But it had been very impressive with all the councillors and war lords

present, — the famous Count Kultur; the Secretary-Who-Files-Scraps-of-Paper, with his tall, distinguished, and melancholy mien; the slant-featured sprig of the Hohenzollerns, with a whole dry-goods store of gilt tape and other trappings on his precious person; and, most splendid of all, in his white Hussar's uniform, a military cape over his impotent arm — the All-Highest.

"Count von Arnheim, of all my faithful subjects I have chosen you as supreme chief of my great Secret Service in the Western hemisphere. As long as you execute your duties faithfully to me and the Fatherland, you will remain at your post, until with my armies and navies I come to relieve you and take possession of the Western world. In that glorious day, I, with the aid of Almighty Gott, will make the city of New York my second capital. Go — for faithful work you will be richly rewarded."

That was *his* picture; he did not see them as they really were, — the greatest set of bluffers, the most impudent gang of four-flushers the world has ever known, each serving his own selfish purpose under the cry of "the Glory of the Fatherland," an issue as false as ever used by any pettifogging politician to cover his own infamous designs.

Audacious gamblers, with world-empire for a stake. But common-sense Jeff had sized them up right when he once said: "They counted on a royal flush with red ace, king, queen, and jack, in their hands, and the last card they drew was a ten-spot, but it turned out black — that was their submarine campaign. It just missed being good. And the Allies hold four aces, England, France, Italy, and America."

But Jeff and the Count von Arnheim were products of totally different schools, and the latter smiled reminiscently, then strode over to the picture of Washington, touched a button, and it slid back revealing in its stead another portrait, with the ascending mustaches and cruel eyes of his master. Again he straightened, his heels clicked together, and he accomplished that wooden, preposterous salute, of which only the Prussian-trained are capable — the officer's apotheosis of the goose-step. The whole business of the concealed picture and the action was quite as melodramatic as only Prussians can be, who for all their seriousness are always play-actors, staging a stupendous "ten-twenty-thirt'" affair for the world, but entirely without comedy, of course, and promising some day to be turned by their enemies into a burlesque and their own

utter rout from the boards where they have strutted for so long.

But for all this mummery, Frederick Arnold was very clever and ingenious, and exceedingly dangerous. He could play as many parts as his imperial master has uniforms, and these are as numerous as United States Cigar Stores in Manhattan.

He had come to this country twenty years before, had gradually become allied with various industries by means of his shrewdness, his connections, and the great treasury behind him. His actual appointment to the chieftaincy of the secret service had taken place some eight years before on one of his many pseudo-pleasure trips to the Continent. Most important of all his connections was the Liberty Insurance Company, of which he was president and general manager. Its activities were great and reached out over many countries. But the beautiful camouflage of the picture of Washington was emblematic of the character of the concern. The immense map, with its myriad little black crosses purporting to represent the various agencies of the Company, in reality indicated the numerous hirelings of the great secret service. That very morning he had received telegraph mes-

sages in code from all over the United States, announcing the destruction of granaries and munition plants, with such trivial incidents as lost American lives. So he bowed to that great map as if to say "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Even the business communications on his desk to which he now turned were not to be taken at face value. Only those had been laid on his desk which had been first carefully sifted by a trusted assistant, working for the Company, of course, but also for a more august employer in Berlin. And even the carefully sifted mail which von Arnheim was examining was couched in insurance terms, but behind them lay a world of irrelevant information that had to do with death, to be sure, but not with the payment of any policies when these sudden deaths were accomplished. A code lay at the master-spy's elbow, the ingenious product of the best brains of the Wilhelmstrasse, — a code almost Sherlock-Holmes proof. The most important message it had translated had been the one that had come the week before, whose first decoding resulted in "Sell all shares Samuel short at once." A second translation produced this pleasant command, "Rush destruction of all troop-ships. Hasten for

the Fatherland." And von Arnheim was not wasting any time.

Considerable legitimate business was done by the concern, otherwise discovery would have been made long ago. It was the first of the month and many innocent people of many nationalities drifted into the outer offices on various errands, but all the morning long there flowed into the more secret strongholds a stream of callers as distinct from the rest as the Gulf Stream is from the waters through which it courses. There was something Teutonic in cast about each, in walk, shape of head, or accent, and although there was no sign of open mirth on their square, unhumorous faces, they seemed to be smiling to themselves as if they were thinking: "Ah, the time will come when we will show these Yankee fools."

The telephone operator was stolid-looking enough, but he was a very skilful employee. Each pay-day he drew two yellow-backs from the Liberty Insurance Company, but despite the steady rise in the much-discussed high cost of living, his bank balance showed an addition of five hundred dollars each month. Truly a remarkable telephone operator! And he could very skilfully separate the chosen sheep whom

the Gentle Shepherd of Berlin loved from the goats of the world who would not enter the fold.

He nodded to one of the former, and fitting in the telephone plug announced:—

"Mr. Ericsson."

The latest caller was tall and had light hair and blue eyes, not the clear, attractive blue, but the vacuous sort, and they were shifty. As his assumed name indicated, he had Swedish blood in his veins, but it was on his mother's side; his father was pure Berlin Prussian. Ten years' crafty work in this country, preceding the war, had given him considerable power in the labor-unions. He had already fomented many strikes among innocent and unsuspecting foreigners, and he had a considerable number of naturalized German-Americans, far from innocent, who were ready to do his bidding.

When he stood before von Arnheim he was addressed by quite a different name.

"Zuckern, I have just received a 'phone from Washington which says, on absolutely reliable authority, that twenty-five thousand troops are to embark on the first of the month. Are you ready?"

"Yes, Excellency; I have fixed the foreman

and twenty *loyal* German-American workmen on the Hoboken docks and everything else is ready."

They consulted an almanac.

"Yes, they'll sail about midnight. According to the tides ten o'clock is the right hour."

Again the operator fitted in the plug: —

"Mr. Spiegel."

Mr. Ericsson, or Zuckern, departed, first having been fortified with the sinews of war which the banker had left and the parting admonition: —

"Remember, ten o'clock on the night of the first."

A moment later, Spiegel, a short, thick-set, round-shouldered German, with white hair and short-sighted, bulbous grey eyes staring behind great spectacles, saluted his chief.

"Spiegel, on the night of the first the troopships and twenty-five thousand Americans are to sail. We have planned to *assist* them in this departure." And here von Arnheim gave a significant gesture, raising his hands suddenly towards the ceiling. Then he smiled, and selected a flower from the vase on the table and placed it with exquisite care in his lapel. "Ten o'clock is the hour set for their departure, which

will, of course, as you can readily understand, be *unexpectedly sudden.* As an additional warning to America, we want a million posters pasted all over the town and a million handbills distributed to these fool New-Yorkers. The editor of the 'Deutschland' will prepare the copy denouncing the Liberty Loan and the sending of troops to France."

"Fine, fine." And narrow-sighted Spiegel bobbed his head up and down and rubbed his hands. They all had the habit of gleefully rubbing their hands, in that office.

Then von Arnheim went on:—

"Here's something for expenses. You get in touch with the editor of the 'Deutschland' at once, and then start your presses. It will be a magnificent night for the Fatherland."

So with his gold Herr Spiegel departed just as, armed cap-a-pie with plumes, furs, lorgnette, and all the fashionable accessories, the handsome Mrs. Rintelen rustled in, without knocking, as was frequently her custom.

Von Arnheim motioned her to a chair, which she drew close to his. He placed his hand on her arm in a lover-like attitude.

"Ach! My dear Hilda, how charming you look!"

Her eyes almost softened and she looked hungrily into his face, almost as if searching for some sign of sincerity and devotion. Then she looked down — modesty and coyness were strange in this proud, distinguished-looking woman.

"Do I really look as beautiful as you used to say I did, my Friedrich?"

"Ten thousand times more so."

She straightened, affected anger, turned slightly away, though studying him out of the corner of her eyes.

"And that simple fool, the Waldron girl; your attentions to her have nothing behind them?"

Strange action for a superman — he playfully flicked her ear!

"A mere matter of business, my dear Hilda — diplomacy, nothing more."

She believed or tried to believe him, then leaned forward, her handsome face near his, when the little insistent telephone bell rang again: —

"Mr. Folly."

She swore gently but feelingly under her breath.

"I forgot — it is the time for his appointment."

Von Arnheim answered the operator: "In just a moment." Then he turned to the woman and hurriedly said: "The troop-ships are to be destroyed on the first. Your meeting in the Garden must be held that night. We'll pack the place with our people, the discontented Sinn Fein faction, Socialists, and the labor element that are against the Government. Of course, there will be a riot, and the riot must come when the ships go up and ten thousand workmen plant our banners and posters all over the town. It will be magnificent!"

"Magnificent!" she exclaimed in admiration.

"You've forgotten something," he added, and handed to her some of the funds Spahn had left.

Although money was one of her most worshipped gods, she took the same hesitatingly, holding it a second in her hand before transferring it to her vanity-bag.

"You know, meine Liebe, I am not risking all for this — it is *for you!*"

"I know, I know — but we must not keep the distinguished gentleman waiting." And he directed that the latter be ushered in, while she shoved the money into her bag and snapped it shut viciously.

So after the introductions were over, Mr. Folly sat between them, with his broadcloth coat, his high pompadour, and best forensic manner, while von Arnheim impressively said to him: —

"It is with the most intense satisfaction that we and all true patriots have watched your noble work. It is horrible, this war, this most *unjust* war, this sacrifice of thousands of innocent lives! By blocking war action in Congress you have done your utmost. Now, we have arranged a meeting of the Defenders of Peace in Madison Square Garden, for the night of the first. If you will only speak for us and persuade these poor, misguided people of the criminal folly of sending their sons to fight other nations' battles, you will serve your country well — and incidentally win many valuable votes for yourself."

The distinguished pacifist and politician pursed his lips, then straightened, and again thrust his hand into his double-breasted broadcloth coat, and, looking over their heads as if he were addressing some vast assemblage, said: —

"I am always glad to be of service. When my country calls, I cannot but heed."

After much handshaking and protestations

of mutual admiration, the two departed—Mr. Folly to his Washington home, where he paced back and forth composing his great speech; Mrs. Rintelen to her Red Cross station, where her assistants on every possible occasion zealously doctored the surgical dressings, while she planned for the great meeting.

Meanwhile Spiegel and the poetic editor of the "Deutschland" were busy writing their copy and setting their great presses in motion, and Ericsson departed to an old barn in the woods back of Fort Lee, where with a group of confederates he outlined the laying of wires under the Hoboken docks and the final planting of the dynamite.

And late that night von Arnheim lay between the high-priced linen sheets of a bed in his palatial Ritz-Carlton suite, propped up against the pillows. Only the reading-lamp above his head was burning, and he lay watching the rings of smoke from his Regina Regina with an expression of satisfaction while he carefully polished each little facet of his gem of a plot. It was a beautiful thing, exquisitely finished. Long he lay there, the shadow lending a sinister aspect to the handsome features and the arrogant eyes. The red core of his cigar glowed angrily and in

the smoke-spirals seemed to writhe the wraiths of his victims to be.

Then, with a sigh of contentment, von Arnheim snapped off the light and slept soundly and as peacefully as a white-souled nun.

CHAPTER XIII

JIMMY FIGURES IT OUT

WHILE von Arnheim and his very efficient assistants were spinning the strands, several very innocent people were in grave danger of being enmeshed in the gigantic web, and yet were utterly unconscious of their peril. That has always been the way of the world. For centuries dwellers in volcanic regions have sung serenades and danced blithely on the sides of the mountain, while in its bowels boiled the red-hot lava soon to destroy them.

So this sunny August morning Garry whistled happily as he opened a package which the morning mail had brought him, and out tumbled a very brave little volume bound in blue, with its title in shining gold. For Garry had written a book. He was the first of that now great army of American soldier-authors whose personal narratives crowded fiction off the newsstands, the book-counters, and the public library shelves, in the years of grace 1917 and 1918. True, there had been tons of stories from the pens of war correspondents and English,

French, and Canadian soldiers, but Garry was the first of the returning Americans to take pen in hand. It was destined to bring him great renown, later on. In it there was nothing to please those solemn people the vulgar world knows as "high-brows." In fact, when Garry's publishing friend had first suggested the idea to him, he had shouted with laughter.

"What, a rough-neck like me write a book! Why, in Salisbury Plain they nearly called out a firing-squad for my murdering the King's English."

The boy did himself a rank injustice, for he was not "a rough-neck" for all his soldier-of-fortune ways, but a gentleman under the skin. Still, he was neither Walter Pater nor H. G. Wells, nor could he have aspired to a job on the "Boston Transcript."

But there was gold in the book. And his story was told — with help and guidance, it is true, from his publishing friend — in the frank, breezy, thoroughly American way that people liked. It was just like his speeches. People who had heard him in his recruiting talks and Liberty Loan appeals, recognized the same quality. The book certainly had the American slant.

The boy felt fully as happy and proud as on

that birthday long ago when his father first lifted him to the saddle of the pony he had just given him. He fingered the bright covers of the little volume as lovingly as he had patted the shiny cantle and horn of the saddle that day.

And nothing would do but to show it to *Her*. It was funny, for Garry was not in the habit of running with his confidences to any one in the world, — that is, since as a little fellow he used to sob out his joys and sorrows in old Margaret MacNeal's arms, poor soul! But this past few months there had grown upon him the habit of telling all about his work and his triumphs to *Her*.

So with clutch in high, he ran to the subway, travelled thence uptown, his thoughts racing ahead of the train all the way, and soon he was in the Red Cross Workroom at Thirty-sixth Street and Madison Avenue, asking, a trifle breathlessly, for Miss Waldron. She came, not in street clothes, but in white, with the beautiful flowing head-dress and small crimson insignia of the Red Cross.

And Garry was sobered. She looked like an angel he thought. His memory harked back to the time when he lay so badly wounded in the hospital, and he thought of what a wonderful

thing it would be to have that lovely face bending over him, those sweet grey-blue eyes, so full of lights and of mystery, looking into his own. It seemed to him that she was something holy.

As for the girl, she came forward with all her old grace and thoroughbred bearing, but her color came and went a little, as she saw the look in his eyes. And the white uniform over her breast seemed to rise and fall a little more quickly.

Their greetings? Just —

"Hello, Helen."

"Hello, Garry."

Formalities had long since been thrown into the discard. Long since? Yes, two months is an age sometimes, and lots of things can happen in that time.

Then, looking rather conscious, he unwrapped the book.

"What a beauty!" she exclaimed.

"Well, it's a little dolled up for me."

"Nonsense, you know you're proud of it," she retorted; then went on, her eyes shining: "Anyway, I am very proud of you. You've done so many things. And now to think *you've actually written a book!*"

Of course, she knew all about it, for had n't

she read the manuscript? She had often discussed it with him, for he had been very anxious for her opinions — and — well, it furnished very plausible excuses for seeing her frequently.

Then she took him by the hand.

"Come right this way. You've got to autograph it. But, Garry, don't make it just the ordinary 'compliments of the author' sort of autograph — lots of people will get that, Garry, for you're rapidly becoming famous, you know, and everybody will be buying your book. But write something that's just for me."

However, she was hardly prepared for the result.

She gasped when he had finished as she read these words in the bold, boyish hand: —

To Helen Waldron, the kind of girl the American soldier is proud to fight for and to die for.

JAMES GARRISON OWEN

"Oh, but that is n't true," she stammered.

"Yes, it is," he replied almost gruffly; and under his breath he added, "I could say a lot more, and I will some day."

It was this scene, observed through the window, which angered von Arnheim. Scrupulous in his observance of the laws of health, as every efficient German should be, he walked from the

Ritz at Forty-seventh Street to the Globe Building at Madison Square each morning. To-day he had reached Helen's station just at this juncture. A few moments before, he had passed through the Grand Central Terminal on the way and paused at the news-stand to purchase a magazine. A little pyramid of copies of Garry's book confronted him. People were asking for it. It had started to sell — that is, as well as books ever sell. Their possibilities are always limited. In a civilized community no two can use the same toothbrush, but a whole village can read the same book. Farther down the avenue a spectacular display of this same work of the new author's in a bookseller's window met his gaze. To add fuel to the fire, a poster announcing one of Sergeant James Garrison Owen's lectures stared at him from a wall of a building on the left. These are advertising days and publishers are not as conservative as they once were. The figure on the wrappers of the books and the posters was that of Garry in uniform racing through barbed wire with bayonet set. All those bayonets were like so many picador darts thrown into von Arnheim's flesh. The scene at the Red Cross Workroom added vitriol to the wounds.

"Impudent Yankee pig-dog, I'll crush him yet." Several other typical but untranslatable epithets of the sort the swashbuckling Berliners get out of their fat systems when things go wrong were added by the Count von Arnheim in a pleasant little conversation with Mr. Frederick Arnold. Thus the Count raged while Mr. Arnold, true to his masterly training, walked urbanely along, revealing to the passers-by nothing but a well-groomed figure in soft hat and well-tailored grey suit, a fresh gardenia in his buttonhole, and that unctuous smile. And so he hurried on to his office to prepare for the fateful September first.

Farther uptown, Betty had just skimmed down the steps of the Waldron home. Her black eyes sparkled, reflecting the sunshine, as she took her seat by Jimmy's side in the same awful-hued sport model racing-car.

Betty was as blithe as the robins on the lawn of the Park through which they circled. But Jimmy's red head never turned to the left or right. He sat firmly gripping the wheel and looked very glum. He had something to tell Betty which he did n't like to tell her, and consequently, boy-like he hid his concern for her under a rough, sullen manner.

"Is n't this a perfect peach of a day?" Betty sang out to him.

"Yep," was his only answer.

"Oh, Jimmy, look at that green and yellow car, with the bulldog in front. It's most as vivid as yours."

"Toot-toot," the horn gave the only answer as he swerved, narrowly missing a bent, near-sighted, professorial sort of a figure, absorbed in a book.

Jimmy seemed to take a savage delight in making the abstracted one drop his book as he leaped for the curb, scared as a jack-rabbit.

Then the car slowed down.

"Just hear that robin on that tree! Is n't that sweet? He seems to be saying, 'Cheer up, cheer up, — *cheer up.*' Jimmy" (with a side-glance at him), "I guess he's talking to *you.*"

"For the luv' o' Mike, Betty, shut up."

Betty's slim figure straightened as if she had been stricken. She recoiled from him. It was n't like Jimmy to speak *like that.* Tears misted the sparkle of the black eyes.

But the boy never once looked at her.

It was an odd but perfectly human mood that possessed him. For Jimmy had been figuring it out. For three long weeks he had been studying

and storming and stewing, all inside, to be sure, for, though frank as any lovable boy, he could conceal his feelings about as thoroughly as the Machiavellian von Arnheim. Most boys can.

He wanted to go. Though under age he felt he *ought* to go. He could n't look a man in khaki in the eyes now. He felt ashamed. Undoubtedly Garry's talk at Carnegie had much to do with it, but the boy's own square, Anglo-Saxon or American nature would have soon brought him face to face with this issue every boy in this land of ours must face sooner or later.

As he steered the car out of the Park into one of the side streets, Betty sitting strangely motionless for her and winking hard to keep the tears back, he thought of his father.

To the boy's appeal that morning, he had hastily gulped down his last swallow of coffee and dismissed the matter with this abrupt verdict: —

"It's all tomfoolery. You're only twenty. Wait a year. The Government knows its business and has carefully considered the question. Twenty-one is the age decided on, and they are right. You wait the year out."

"But, father, they need men and I'm a man."

In answer the elder McLean had thrown back his head and laughed at this and then said: —

"The matter's ended. I *won't* give my consent." And then the door had closed behind his father as he hurried to his car.

His mother — his tall, graceful, distinguished-looking mother, with the pale, handsome face, and the somewhat worn and self-centred expression about the eyes and mouth — had added: —

"Your father is right. You are too young. There are plenty of others going. Now, run along, Jimmy, and have a good time with your car."

And she bent over and kissed him, a little abstractedly — for she had so many social activities maturing on that day — and yet with at least something of a mother's fondness.

They settled it — that father and mother. Their way of dismissing the subject with superior wisdom, of treating him as a little boy, was the very thing that crystallized his determination.

As he stopped his red car in front of the Waldron home, his mind was quite made up. Nor was it the sheer obstinacy of youth. In his boy's way Jimmy had figured it out. He called it being square and that sort of thing, mumbled

something about not being there in a pinch. But Jimmy had heeded the great call.

There was more than a mist in Betty's eyes when they reached that shaded drive a half-mile beyond Grant's Tomb that winds so temptingly for lovers above the beauty of the river. The tears were rolling down her cheeks now.

Jimmy at last turned and for the first time saw the quiver of her lips.

"Betty, I did n't mean it."

He stopped the car. No one was in sight. His arm went around her shoulder.

A choking sob or two; then she bravely smiled. She was happy for a moment.

Then he swallowed hard and blurted out: —

"Betty, I'm going."

That was all. She knew what he meant. A quiver ran through her figure.

"I hated to tell you —"

Then she broke down and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Just a faint suggestion of tears were in the boy's own eyes. "Don't Betty, don't."

With an effort she controlled herself as he pleaded with her:—

"You would n't have me a quitter, would you, dear?"

"No"— a sob — "of c-c-course not, but I can't bear to lose you, just when we are so happy together, *always* — are n't we, dear?"

"Yes, but we'll have all these good times to look back on — and I'll come back, don't you be afraid."

"*But suppose you should n't!*"

And, smile tolerantly as wise men will at what they call calf-love, there was a beauty and strength of devotion between this sparkling-eyed sprite of a girl and this red-haired, freckled-faced, earnest boy trying his best to comfort her, for which the richest of men and women might profitably barter their all.

The girl dried her tears. And the maternal which springs up in all women in crises, even at her scant eighteen years, enveloped him.

With her as with the boy, her words of love did not match the jewelled phrases of Shakespeare's Juliet. But they meant as much.

"I'll be a sport, Jimmy, dear." And she patted his hair and kissed him and nestled close beside him, as they drove back—slowly—while a bright sliver of new moon, like the very spirit of young Love, floated over the blue hills above the Hudson.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SPINNERS

Two nights before the first, Ericsson (or Zuckern, as von Arnheim hailed him) strolled along a street in the old Bergen section of Jersey City, his vacuous blue eyes shiftily watching for traces of secret service men. Recently signs had not been lacking that they were watching his movements. But so far he had fooled them completely.

At a corner of a street whose twists showed that it had been but a cow-path in the city's infancy three hundred years ago, he paused, ostensibly to light a cigar. Carefully, with cupped hands, he shielded his face from the light and at the same time studied the bright plate-glass windows of a delicatessen shop opposite. It was spotless and spick and span. Cleanliness next to Godliness — no, not here, but perhaps next to *Gottliness.*

The proprietor of the shop could be seen through the window, reading a German newspaper, and inwardly chuckling as he read the casualty lists of Americans serving with the Allied troops. He was quite pleased this eve-

ning, for right at the top was the name of a humble corporal, "killed in action," and this corporal was the son of a widow up the street who had berated him soundly a few days before for some pro-German utterances — so a pleased feeling radiated throughout his huge bulk, from the large rubicund head, shaped like a newel-post, down through the vast paunch and flanks and calves, whose porcine curves a prize-stock-breeding farmer might well envy.

Ericsson was studying the arrangement of goods in the shop-window. Now, the proprietor of the shop had three sons, and, oddly enough, all were in munitions works. The particular arrangement of the cans of brightly labelled soups and baked beans meant that the oldest boy, whose services Ericsson needed, was at home. It was a simple code and so easily arranged. The juxtaposition of sauerkraut and dill pickles meant one thing, potato salad and juicy roast beef another, but care was needed, for of late suspicion had begun to rest on this shop.

Truly the great German Empire uses the humblest of instruments, but then no instrument, not even delicatessen or sauerkraut, pretzel or wienerwurst, should be scorned.

Ericsson entered the shop and asked for a schmierkäse sandwich and a glass of milk. (He never made greater sacrifice for the Fatherland than when he drank that *milk*.) He stood there munching, hoping for a word with the proprietor, but the little shop was crowded, so he had to leave. It was dangerous to linger too long. But the message had been wigwagged by the simple request for that sandwich and milk; so fifteen minutes after he left, the oldest son emerged from the living-room back of the store and by a circuitous route of trolleys and transfers through that ugly misshapen lot of buildings which they call Hoboken, and which really spoils one of the finest sites for a city in the world, he arrived near Fort Lee and repaired to an old barn hidden in a thick plot of woodland. It had been used as a wireless station for messages to strange ships at sea, and the plotters had actually gotten away with it. Ericsson was already here when Köcher, the delicatessen keeper's son, a German thoroughly Americanized *outwardly*, arrived. A third, a rough-looking individual in a tattered hat, wide trousers, and a heavy-set, scowling, unshaven face, completed the group. In low voices they arranged the final details of the explosion. Infernal machines had

already been planted in the hold of the troop-ship, with the aid of bribed and disaffected workmen. Explosives had been carefully placed at dead of night under the piers of the great dock, with wires running under the street to an old saloon on the water-front, now closed by the Federal authorities, but still used as a cheap lodging-house.

Ericsson finally arranged for the three to meet at this lodging-house on the morning of the first when he would divulge to them the hour and the signal agreed on for the unloosing of the great plot in all its ramifications. The signal, of course, must be kept secret until the last. Then the three parted.

And Spiegel, the near-sighted, bulbous-eyed, bespectacled German editor, had made his preparations very efficiently too. He was this pleasant summer evening surveying with keen satisfaction the tons of posters and leaflets denouncing the war and all Government work, which lay in his storeroom.

The poetic editor of the "Deutschland," John Silver Vrooman, was at this moment composing for the next day's issue a fiery editorial denouncing the war. With spectacles and black ribbons dangling therefrom, he was in a white-

hot fervor of composition. Before the war he had astonished the world with his erotic odes and poems dedicated to Venus — astounded them the more, for his spare, anæmic face and frame seemed scarcely to qualify him for a favored suitor of the Cyprian goddess. To do him some justice, he knew nothing of the plot, but his advertising columns had to be supported, and so after 1914 he transferred his devotion and pen from Venus to Wilhelm Hohenzollern.

And Mrs. Rintelen, handsome, as always, in face and figure and modistry, sat in a room of the Biltmore (she always frequented the fashionable places, whose managements were quite ignorant of her activities) with her committee of German-Americans, social climbers and all she could gather into her net, finishing the details of the speeches, carefully working up to the grand climax of Mr. Folly's. She had already arranged that all the German societies and Sinn Feiners and I.W.W.'s should attend the meeting in force.

Very adroit was Mrs. Rintelen and she had even inveigled into serving on her committee the wife of a prominent owner of a so-called American newspaper. He was at present sojourning at a summer resort, and, strange coin-

cidence, a beautiful girl of some two and twenty summers was also there. Two years back she had been a very humble member of a musical comedy chorus, with a face and figure. Now she was a star in a musical *revue* and in motion pictures, and there had been an avalanche of bill-posters and huge sign-boards displaying her name above the Great White Way. Pretty face and figure, but slight mentality — what a miraculous meteoric rise to Fame! But she was also at the resort, displaying a new and very beautiful pearl ring, costing at least a modest fortune.

To do some justice to the famous newspaper owner's wife who was *not* at the summer resort, but in New York, she knew nothing at all of the plot, but the committee was socially quite desirable, you see.

The owner of the paper, by the way, had prepared a remarkable editorial — at least had instructed his able lieutenant to prepare one in demagogic language that would best appeal to his wide constituency, scoffing at the lunacy of sending our boys to Europe to fight other people's battles. To do him justice, he had no knowledge of the great plot, but on general principles the editorial appeared next morning.

Mr. Folly's speech had been carefully finished

by this time and his secretary was purchasing tickets for train and sleeper to New York.

And so they met in von Arnheim's office on the afternoon of August thirty-first — Mrs. Rintelen, Ericsson, Spiegel, and the master of them all, von Arnheim.

Sitting in state before them, he approved of their reports, metaphorically patting each on the back.

"Remember," he said. "So many of our plots have failed. We *must* make this a success. If need be, you must die for the Fatherland."

They all murmured assent, though secretly each was thinking how pleasant it would be to live, with their fat incomes they were so *righteously* earning under that slogan of Junkertum-bunkum — "For the Fatherland." If it were possible to take the "H" out of "Fatherland," you would have the truth by substituting a "T" — "For Fatterland, Fatterpocketbooks, Fattertummies, Fatterheads, Fattereverything."

And then von Arnheim told them the signal.

It is hard to account for his choice, although the signal was one that would be instantly recognized by all the agents connected with the plot, throughout all the district.

Perhaps its spectacular phase appealed to

him, for underneath the mask of amiability he was very like his master, who is fond of swaggering in uniforms and "pulling the shining sword stuff," as Garry used to say to Jeff. That quality in him was one reason for his post in America. The All-Highest sympathized with it, and believed that, possessing it, von Arnheim would more effectively impress the "idiotic Yankees."

It was a weakness, of course, but then every master-brain has its weak cells, and to paraphrase an old proverb, a brain is no stronger than its weakest cell. For that matter the German secret service has many blunderers — Boy-Ed, von Papen, etc., etc., were none too subtle. Like the advertising of some famous firms, the German secret service and propaganda has gained a measure of success through sheer mass and quantity rather than quality.

But, in any event, von Arnheim was just saying to the three: —

"The hour is ten o'clock to-morrow night. The signal will be three flashes from the tower above."

CHAPTER XV

THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER

BRIGHT and clear it dawned — this first of September — a really beautiful day, as rare as those days in June of which the poets sing.

And where has Jeff, Old Jeff, been these past few weeks? He always had a peculiar, an almost uncanny, faculty for being "among those present" when things happened, for Jeff was a "pinch hitter" in the game of Life if there ever was one.

This particular morning he was strolling down Broadway from his boarding-house in the upper Forties, with nothing of any importance to do. The life was beginning to pall on him; he longed for the free existence of the plains; he fairly ached to throw his long legs over a live bronc' once more. Still, he knew there were "bigger doings" across the seas, for, as he expressed it, "Hell is sure poppin' over there, and a real live man ought to be helpin' set off some of the fireworks."

Only his affection for Garry had kept him in New York for such a length of time. And now

he was determined, in spite of his fifty-two years, by hook or crook to get back in the ranks again.

It was hardly the natural habitat for the old veteran — Broadway, especially in the torn-up Forties where the great street and Seventh Avenue intersect and groups of small-time actors clogged the sidewalks and chattered their shop-talk.

"No, Billy's not working." . . . "Yes, they open in Stamford." . . . "Van's gotta swell new act." . . . "Yes, big time." . . . "No, she's split with him, she left the baby with her mother. Poor guy! he's all broke up over it. He was nuts on her, but then that manager's going to star her." . . . "Yes, sealskin and pearls and all that goes with it." . . . "Think I'll do a single." . . . "The U.B.O.'s sure killed the White Rats." . . . "My Gawd, but it was a riot." . . . "Bye, bye, honey boy," etc.

It was a strange lingo to the tall, bronzed figure who towered over most of these small-time folks with their nimble tongues and nimble heels and also nimble emotions.

Jeff's garb is not that we used to know — the flannel shirt and Stetson hang in the closet of his boarding-house now. When in Rome, etc., etc.

—that motto Jeff thoroughly believed in, except in matters of moral or physical courage, and, being an observant person, soon after his arrival in the metropolis, he noticed that the articles of apparel mentioned above were scarcely metropolitan. So he dropped into a shop which advertised very extensively in the papers, telling the world how much a man's fame and success and even his moral and mental fibre depend on his raiment, with the corollary, of course, that no place in the universe could turn out so proper a man as said shop. To read the "ads" one would almost think that his soul's welfare depended on his immediately sheathing himself in some of the all-wool meltons or serges or Scotch mists, especially imported through the perspicacity of this firm.

The majestic floor-walker had welcomed Old Jeff and passed him on to a youth of draft age, who leaped from behind the counter with the welcome of Billy Sunday for a trail-hitter and promptly tried to outfit Jeff with a bright-striped worsted and a belted coat and a mock Panama. He had sized up the newcomer, you see, as west of the Hudson, unfamiliar with the ways of the only world, Manhattan; in short, a "poor fish" or "a boob." These characteriza-

tions were silent, of course. Now, "Old Jeff" was amused and let him rave.

And the clerk, following implicitly the sales-policy of the house, decided he would make up his customer's mind for him, and though Old Jeff had never uttered a word, laid bright-striped worsted, belted coat, and mock Panama aside, and swiftly as a waiter at Murray's, anxious for fresh clients at his table, produced his salesman's book.

"Shall I send them or will you take them with you?"

Jeff continued to smile.

Suddenly a bright idea occurred to the youth after he had pencilled the three items on his carboned pad.

"Would n't you like a pair of shoes, sir?"

Without waiting for an answer he again made up his provincial (meaning "west of the Hudson") customer's mind for him.

"Right this way, sir!"

Now, it happened that the shop was long on a certain style of footwear. Each wily clerk who unloaded a pair of this overstock on an unsuspecting customer received a small bonus. So quite humanly and naturally he produced a pair, with a sugary grin and a syrupy voice

that would have dumfounded Mr. Herbert Hoover.

"Very neat, sir, the latest thing, sir."

It was the last straw.

Jeff looked down at his number twelves and the high-heeled leather boots and then at the pearl grey, suede-topped, pearl-buttoned things.

Was homicide ever justifiable? Yes, sometimes; but after one mad, wrathful moment he thought better of it, and with an infinitely patient, slow, soft drawl, checked the sartorial enthusiasm of this Broadway-wise youth.

"Say, sonny, who 's a-buyin' this outfit, you or me?"

And the natural good taste and quick judgment which, oftener than people realize, distinguish the observant man who has lived in the open, came to his rescue.

So this morning of the first, as a result, he was garbed in quiet blue serge, neat straw hat, blue tie, and necessarily low collar, for his Adam's apple was a bit prominent — a different outfit, but Old Jeff was still there, — height, keen, quizzical eyes, with the wrinkles around them, worn by years of gazing over sunburnt deserts, the lean face, close-cropped mustache,

said prominent Adam's apple, and neck-muscles like whipcord.

He was on his way downtown to execute a commission of Garry's, but he stopped a moment at the Herald Square bulletin board. He had grown quite fond of the motley argumentative crowds that gathered and wrangled below it, and then, too, whenever he felt gloomy over the Allied fortunes he used to saunter thither for the message of cheer that it invariably had for all but the pro-Germans.

Garry had laughed at Jeff's fondness for this rendezvous once, and the latter had explained it this way: —

"That there little board sure deserves the V.C. If old Hindenburg makes a gain it's always got something to offset it. It can turn a defeat into a victory, quicker than Napoleon. They tell me it's been that way ever since 1914. It's amusin', but it's sure in a good cause, and my hat's off to it and all the other papers that had the sense to see the right from the start; not like that paper there" — as a newsboy edged into the crowd trying to sell a sheet camouflaged with a patriotic name. "It climbed on the band-wagon when it saw which was the popular parade. The other papers we're dis-

cussin' are white, but that other sheet's colored like the yoke of a three-minute egg. The man that owns it has as many iron men as any capitalist he knocks, and he's not usin' 'em any better either, yet he's continually excitin' the poor devils that read his paper to riot and rebellion and cryin' 'Peace, Peace,' and boostin' the Germans and tryin' to raise particular hell between the Japs and Uncle Sam, because it suits his purpose in those sections he owns down in California. He's playin' for his own pocket all the time. You watch his paper; pretty soon he'll put a nice lovin' patriotic little inscription over the front door, but look out for the poisoned swill he passes out the back."

Jeff and Garry had had another spirited conversation the evening before, all about a certain Mr. Frederick Arnold. Both agreed in their dislike of the man and their description of him as "phoney." The boy had decided by this time that there was nothing in the jealousy theory, though he was probably partially deluding himself, and he had finally made this suggestion: —

"Jeff, why don't you drop in at the Globe Building and investigate? You might find some trail. I can't, for he knows me, and already he loves me just like a range-steer loves a sheep

or an old souse loves Bevo. But he does n't know you. Besides, you were once deputy sheriff of El Paso County, and this 'll give you a chance to show you 're not a has-been and how your system works in the big town."

The ex-deputy sheriff had accepted the challenge and it was this commission he was on his way this morning to execute.

After lingering a moment or two before the bulletin board he walked on to Madison Square, and sat on one of the park benches opposite the Globe Building awaiting his distinguished quarry.

Punctually at nine-thirty the gentleman in question ended his morning walk at the great portico of the sky-scraper and he entered the elevator with Jeff right behind him. All the way up Jeff studied the man, and the more he looked at him the less he liked him, for though Jeff had n't fully analyzed the case, somehow he smelt the Prussic acid boiling under that sweetness of exterior which fooled so many of his victims. He wanted to get his two hands around that neck and twist it until he released the dark secrets he was carrying, or else "cashed in his checks." He stayed with him all the way up and with him got out on the top floor.

Resolving to go farther in his search, after

loitering around the hall for a few moments he entered the office. He went to the desk and asked an impatient clerk many, and purposely stupid, questions about life-insurance policies, keeping his weather-eye peeled the while for possible clues.

In this most efficiently run office there was little to arouse the suspicions of the average person. But the old veteran's keen mind was keener than ever this morning. He did notice one thing. It was the advent of a tall, Scandinavian-looking person with eyes of a vacuous and shifty blue. The minute Jeff laid eyes on the newcomer he decided that he did n't like him any more than he did his more distinguished-looking boss. And what aroused his suspicions most was the number of Liberty Loan and patriotic buttons which Ericsson sported so ostentatiously — "a Judas trick" the ex-deputy sheriff reflected. "I'll bet ole Benedict Arnold used to trim himself up with buttons of the Minute Men's Lodge, 'Spirit of '76,' and 'Remember Valley Forge,' and everything patriotic going while he was double-crossing the Liberty Boys."

He also noticed, while apparently groping for the meaning of some of the clerk's explana-

tions, that Ericsson had immediate entrée to the inner offices.

Then, when the latter emerged, there was something triumphant and electric about his manner, which would not have been evident to the average eyes, but was to Jeff's senses preternaturally aroused. For Jeff had another of his famous "hunches," and whenever blessed by one of these he invariably "carried on."

So he left, as nearly at Ericsson's heels as he could without arousing suspicion, and followed him at a distance, over street-car and ferry to Hoboken, and finally saw him disappear within the cheap lodging-house near the water-front.

The United States secret service had done yeoman's work since war had been declared, but Hoboken is so largely composed of foreigners that it was impossible to banish them all. The saloon below the cheap furnished rooms was closed, but Ericsson, possessing a zone-pass, still stayed in the room he had rented months before.

A little lunch Jeff tried at a fly-infested, smelly restaurant, spent an hour or so wandering up and down the streets, but nothing rewarded his vigilance.

He talked with one or two regulars, and then

went to the lodging-house and hired a room. There was no sign of the Teutonic-Swede and he did not dare ask questions, so, feigning fatigue, he yawned and ascended the rickety stairs.

He listened at the cracked walls of the musty little room, but all was quiet. A window on the alley revealed nothing but garbage and a prowling cat.

For a while he sat on a hard-bottomed chair, smoking his pipe and surveying the view from the front window. The street was under martial law—there were only a few civilian passers-by and some shop-keepers standing in their doorways. A little up the street a sentry walked back and forth. Beyond loomed the huge piers and the slanting masts and funnels of the troop-ships. Tugs and lighters busily puffed over the placid waters of the North River, and on the other shore the wonderful towers of Manhattan, grey in the on-coming twilight, rose majestically against the sky. Almost directly opposite, the Globe Building towered above the others. Soon its great lantern would shine forth.

And only sixteen feet away from him, in the farther room, sat the three — Ericsson, Köcher, and the unkempt, rough German, who had met

in the barn back of Fort Lee — patiently waiting, biding their time.

As for the master of them all, von Arnheim, he transacted his business that morning, very coolly and efficiently, that is, that part of his business which concerned much more important matters than mere insurance, though the two pursuits had this in common — their stakes were life and death. But in the game von Arnheim was now playing the cards were stacked against the unsuspecting public. The Imperial German Government has all the odds in its favor usually enjoyed by blacklegs and cheats, which is one great reason why the war has lasted so long.

Towards late afternoon, however, the master-spy grew impatient, and in his impatience evolved a plan that could scarcely be called sound. It suited his pride and vanity, however, and concerned the girl whom through sheer self-love he was now determined to possess, because he was infatuated with her and she had discouraged his attentions of late and to all appearances favored Garry.

Craft and crime long pursued often cause the cleverest brain to deteriorate. That is perhaps why he slipped a cog and almost blundered, just

as his sovereign blundered in Belgium and has so often in his guesses at the psychology of other peoples. And then the new little plan gratified that half-fanatic love of the spectacular that also distinguished both him and his master. Furthermore, the United States secret service had not visited him, and he perhaps grew careless, as even supermen do.

Turning to the 'phone he called the operator: —

"Find out if Mrs. Rintelen is in. If so, ask her to wait for me."

A moment later: —

"Yes, sir, she says she will wait for you."

It was four-thirty when he met her at her home.

The coolness that usually distinguished the handsome Mrs. Rintelen was disturbed when she met him. He was the only one who seemed able to mar her perfect poise or to soften those eyes which were so strikingly beautiful in a tigerish way.

"Hilda, I want you to invite the Waldron girl to dine with us to-night — anywhere, it won't matter."

He struck fire from her then.

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"What is the matter with you? You know, in our particular business, Hilda, self-control is quite essential."

"Self-control for the business of Berlin, yes, but it has nothing to do with *our* affair. I've had enough of this trying to arrange meetings between you and that mooning chit of a girl."

"Soft — now — soft."

She writhed and grew furious.

"I believe you're in love with her, you fool, and you're double-crossing me."

"Hilda, *you're* the fool. This girl serves a purpose. If she goes with us, especially to-night, she helps to throw off suspicion from us. I can't understand why the Yankee secret service has left us alone so long. But they are stupid and utterly inefficient. Still, we must be careful, and the girl, with her Yankee connections and her father an official in the War Department, is very good camouflage."

"A very clever excuse" — and she bit her lip. Still, the storm was over, her temper had spent its violence, and she looked as if she were looking for some lover-like persuasion. She wanted very much to believe him.

Von Arnheim sensed this and gratified her. Taking her in his arms he said purringly: —

"Now, my dear Hilda, listen to reason. You are the only woman I have ever loved." (Shades of Ananias!—what "old stuff" for a master-spy—and this worldly wise woman fell for it. But she wanted to, so that makes all the difference in the world.) "I must pay a little attention to this girl—must even — er — make a little love to her. But it is my duty to serve the Fatherland. I do not love her."

"Will you swear that is true?"

He held up his hand and for a moment her fine figure with all its panther-like grace relaxed in his arms.

Her beautifully moulded arm drew his head down to hers, as she murmured: "And you have n't forgotten that wonderful summer at Chamounix, and those beautiful months at Constantinople?"

His answer somehow satisfied her and she went on: —

"You have made the right choice, meine Liebe; you won't regret it. She is all ice on the surface and ice beneath, too. And I — I am ice on the surface, but all *flame beneath.*"

"All flame," he murmured to please her, and gave her the kiss she longed for and carried off the little scene perfectly, although he had long

since tired of her. Still, he got away with it, which was all that was necessary.

The doorway of the Red Cross Workroom at which Helen worked was darkened, or rather brightened, a little later by the fascinating presence of Mrs. Rintelen, and the invitation delivered, though von Arnheim's name was not mentioned.

Although still, as always, loyal to her friends, Helen had refused so many invitations from this quarter recently, that she accepted and telephoned her home. Betty was not in, so she gave the message to the maid.

At six the two were seated in the roof-garden of the Biltmore when a page came by calling Mrs. Rintelen's name.

She looked at the card and read: —

"Mr. Frederick Arnold."

Helen in her frank-hearted way suspected no manipulation and von Arnheim was soon seated at their table.

From fruit cocktail to ice she was rather abstracted, though answering courteously such questions as were put to her. To tell the truth she was a little bored by von Arnheim, though far from guessing his dual nature. In her society days, with little to do, she had been interested

by his cosmopolitan ways and chatter of other worlds, embassies, kings, great musicians and such. But recently her mind had been filled with bigger things — the battles across the seas, her work of mercy, her longing to be of some greater help, and — possibly — a bright-eyed, ruddy-faced soldier with a scar on his temple occupied some of her thoughts, both sleeping and waking, although she would not have admitted that, even to herself.

Von Arnheim inwardly chafed at her indifference.

As every one in New York knows, the roof-garden of the Biltmore is far above the city streets. In the evening breeze flowing through the great open windows, the curling strands of her bright-brown hair wavered enchantingly about her forehead. She gazed at the growing green things that bordered the room, the stars through the open windows, the diners at the candle-lit tables, talking in gay but subdued voices that harmonized with the twilight hour. And then she turned and looked at the pretty artificial terraces built at the eastern end of the dining-hall. Over them clear waters tumbled cascade-fashion, and lights, gleaming underneath the glass foundations of the terraces,

glorified the waters, and their ripple was very pleasant. The look of inquiry about the profile and those grey-blue eyes, as if she was searching for higher, nobler things, was intensified and rendered mysterious by the beauty of the evening scene as she sat there leaning on her elbow, her thoughts ranging far and wide.

At this loveliness the Prussian gazed baffled. He never could understand the spiritual side of the girl's nature, or any one's for that matter.

Her abstraction was such that after the check had been paid she assented to his suggestion for a drive on Riverside and soon the three were seated in his car.

The girl was not only abstracted, but fatigued from a hard week of Red Cross service. Her superb vitality seemed to have vanished for the time and she had succumbed to that quiescent mood of reaction when one simply wants to float along and leave to others decisions as to course and destination, so she only half heard and nodded her head in dreamy assent when Mrs. Rintelen said: —

"Please drop me at Madison Square Garden. I've promised to attend the meeting, you know. You said that you would show us the view from the Tower to-night. It's magnificent, they say.

But you need n't bother to pick me up. It's only a block from the Garden and I'll meet you in the entrance at nine-thirty."

They bowled along pleasantly enough through the Park and the Drive for a while, and then, returning, reached the Globe Building at the hour set by Mrs. Rintelen. With his usual foresight von Arnheim had manipulated affairs so that both the watchman and night elevator-man were retainers of his, so no suspicion attached to his presence there at that hour.

Helen hesitated at first when they found that Mrs. Rintelen was not there, but she was still in the same mood and her objections were overruled by von Arnheim, who suggested that they wait for Mrs. Rintelen in the more comfortable offices above. They ascended. The watchman of the Company admitted them and von Arnheim switched on the lights. They sat for a while conversing languidly of many things.

But Mrs. Rintelen did not come. Von Arnheim looked at his watch. It was nine-forty-five.

The first of September was a very hard one for poor Betty. To understand her feelings, let us flash back, movie-wise, for a moment or two to the morning of the thirty-first.

After breakfast Betty had tried hard to busy herself with little tasks in her room and was not at all successful.

Jimmy had *gone*, as he said he would. Under twenty-one and therefore not of draft age, he had volunteered in a Guard Regiment which was feverishly trying to raise its old peace strength of twelve hundred men to the number required by the new War Department ruling. Jimmy was strong and athletic, had made his letters on the Princeton baseball and hockey teams, and moreover had had the groundwork of an excellent military training at the best "prep school" in the land. He was, therefore, excellent recruiting material and was quickly snapped up and mustered in at the Regimental Armory. Already he had spent a few weeks in camp, and, if the rumors flying about town about his regiment were true, had an excellent chance of landing in France long before most of his friends who had gone with the Seventh to Spartanburg or with the old Squadron A.

Betty made a mess of her simple tasks that morning. At last she took Jimmy's picture and threw herself downward on the bed, her slender ankles, with one little foot slipperless, crossed behind her in the air. Her black Castle-bobbed

hair tumbled in pretty disorder about her cheeks.

"How handsome my boy is in his uniform," she said to herself.

"*My* boy," she repeated softly.

Tears slowly zigzagged down her faint-flushed olive cheeks and fell, one on the glass, the other on the silver frame of the photograph.

She checked herself.

"I must n't cry — I m-m-m-must n't — I *won't!*"

Resolutely she took out her foolish little handkerchief. It was one of those microscopic bits of linen, at which superior Mr. Man never ceases to wonder and laugh. Wonders and laughs, yes — but at least once in his life very eagerly stoops to pick up, when it *happens* to fall to the ground, and carries surreptitiously in his *left* vest pocket for at least three months afterwards. Foolish and adorable, these filmy things typify femininity better than anything else under the sun, except perhaps hairpins and tears, and — the Red Cross.

So Betty smiled at the picture and rubbed the mist away from its glass and the silver frame very tenderly.

"You asked me to be a sport and I will, Jimmy, dear."

She kissed the figure on brow and eyes and lips.

Then the telephone rang.

"Hello! Hello!"

She was all impatience.

"Why, it's *you!*"

Even with the instrument in her hand she danced in her old blithe way, first on one foot, then the other; she just could n't keep still now.

"In the Penn Station? You'll be right over? Oh, Jimmy!"

And she broke into a little silvery snatch of song as she hung up the receiver.

Then she ran down the steps and sat on the lowest one. No old butler was going to be the first to let Jimmy in.

That old wrist-watch must be wrong. It said ten minutes — now twelve — of course, it's wrong. She must take it to the jeweller's — fifteen —

But then the bell.

And his arms and lips.

At last she drew away and stood with both her hands slanting up to his shoulders and looked

him over from that bright "brick-top" thatch of his to his brown puttees.

"Why, Jimmy, boy, you look just beautiful in that uniform!"

"And you, Betty! A month ago I'd have said you looked like a million dollars — but now I think you look like an—" and he paused, boyishly reluctant to grow sentimental.

"Like what? Jimmy, tell me—" she roguishly repeated the command, with a little silvery inflection, emphasizing the first word — "*tell* me."

"Well, then, like an angel!"

Thirty minutes of this fascinatingly foolish chatter. Some of her maternal ancestors, who hung in dusty dignity on the walls (her *paternal* were n't considered worth a gilt frame), looked sternly down on the pair. But I think they must have been winking at each other and enjoying the two young things in the heyday of their youth and love. Winking and perhaps wondering how soon, alas! these two would become ancestors, mere dust in a tomb and painted effigies on a wall.

But the thirty minutes were up. And then he tried to let her know, or at least guess the truth, without betraying any Government

secrets. He did it as tenderly as ever a man far older in years could have done.

"You know, Betty, I may have to go at any time, without saying 'Good-bye.' If the word comes I'll have to go with my regiment. If you don't hear from me for a few days, you'll know it's all right and I'll cable as soon as I reach the other side."

She quivered throughout her slender body for a second, gave him one long, clinging kiss, then with her hands on his shoulders looked in his face and the old sparkle bravely shone through the mist in her eyes.

"Yes, I'm proud of you, Jimmy, and, can't you see! I *am* a sport."

His scant two hours of leave, all that he had had since enlisting and which he was lucky to get now, were almost up. She put on her hat and went with him to say "Good-bye" at his own home, so that she might be with him a little longer.

After he had left, she stayed overnight with his mother, who had grown quite fond of the girl, in her own rather self-centred way.

Both morning and afternoon of the first wore on slowly, and just before dinner Betty started home.

She had hardly grasped the full significance of what Jimmy had said about leaving without saying "Good-bye," but suddenly the truth struck her. He was sailing soon, something told her, sailing that *very day!* She had borne up bravely, but the reaction had come. She walked with her head down, a pitiful figure. The parting had been much harder than she realized, and she reached home with nerves all unstrung.

The house was dark. No one answered the bell. Fumbling in her bag she found a latch-key and let herself in. Helen had always guarded her sister with a mother's care, and she never would have left her alone at such a time if she had only known. But then Jimmy's visit and departure were entirely unexpected, and Helen was at this very moment at dinner with Mrs. Rintelen and von Arnheim.

There was no maid on hand to deliver Helen's message. After receiving it, the frivolous, empty-headed domestic, knowing that Waldron was in Washington and the two girls were away for the day, had gone joy-riding with the neighboring chauffeur.

Betty, wandering through the darkened rooms, at last heard sounds of revelry issuing from the pantry. Timorously she stole to the door.

The cook had yielded to her ancient weakness and had had little difficulty in persuading the butler to join her. They were having one beautiful time! The bottles and the drunken singing told the story.

Betty went to her room. She telephoned friends; some were out and the others had not seen Helen. For a while the girl sat by the window. In her sorrow, the loneliness, the darkness, the silence of the house, broken only by occasional bursts of frenzied song from below, almost drove her distracted.

At eight-thirty she stole down again and listened fearsomely at the pantry door.

With a whiskey bottle tipsily held in mid-air, Higgins, the butler, was dispensing the following "gloom" (a typical pro-German rumor of the day) in a mixture of Cockney and hiccoughs and sniffles to the cook, who rocked back and forth with her apron over her head in an ecstasy of drunken sobs: —

"Missus MacGoorty — Hi tell you hit's troo — orspitals in Brooklyn is full w-wounded men from battleships — hover 'alf th' transhports is sunk — by them b-b-b-bloody shubmarines. 'Top Hats' in Washin'ton keeps noos from us poor b-b-b-blighters" — here he punctuated his

recital with maudlin blubbering — "Blime me, if 'alf the poor beggars ever reach shore!"

And then they both burst into drunken wailing.

In the girl's distracted state, this was the last straw.

Poor Betty! She had tried so hard to be a sport and keep her promise to Jimmy. But now her nerves snapped. She seized hat and cloak and rushed out of the house. Where? Vaguely she felt that he would sail from Hoboken — she had heard that most of the troop-ships sailed from there — she *must* see him once more before he was lost. And so she raced on through the night.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EVENING OF THE FIRST

By leaning far out of the window of the lodging-house room Jeff could read the clock in the tower of the Lackawanna Station which fronts the North River not far from the old Lloyd line. It was seven-thirty — Congress had not yet cheated the sun with its daylight-saving plan, so it was already dark. Across the river the lights in the towers of Manhattan were already beginning to shine, the Globe Tower glowing with particular brilliance.

There was no sign yet of Ericsson.

"He sure is lyin' low," said Jeff to himself, "and there's no way to smoke him out."

So he gave up the hunt, and, paying his bill, left the place and sauntered from the water-front to a side street and entered a saloon a few blocks away, not in the area proscribed by the Government and therefore free to dispense liquor. Its front was unpromising — so also the low ceiling, the dirty sawdust floor, and rough customers within, but the steak he ordered turned out thick and juicy, the French fried

potatoes were of just the right crispness and properly browned, and the beer the best Hoboken could afford, and Hoboken, within the memory of living man, has always been very particular about its hops.

After he had devoured this ample meal in a leisurely way, Jeff felt quite comfortable and lit his pipe, which was black as the grimiest coal-pit and odorous as Boche gas. There were now eight other occupants of the room, alternately burying their thick Teutonic faces in foaming steins and then in their newspapers. These Jeff noticed were all in the German language and their rustling was about as welcome to him as the rattle of a coiled rattlesnake on his Texas plains.

"This looks too much like Little Berlin, for me," he said to the waiter. "Guess I'll pull my freight. Give me the check."

Jeff had spent considerable time in discussing that steak and lingered over the smoke and stein afterwards. When he looked at the clock on the wall the hands pointed at nine-thirty-five. It was, by the way, just five minutes after Helen and von Arnheim entered the offices of the Liberty Insurance Company, although Jeff, of course, knew nothing of that. He was just

about to leave for more wholesome quarters when he heard a disturbance in the adjoining bar-room. His table was right next the swinging doors and over them he could hear every word of the drunken, boastful conversation of some ugly customer at the bar.

"Ve vill show de tam fools."

Jeff listened. After his still hunt of Ericsson anything might be a clue. As an excuse he beckoned the waiter and, feigning intoxication, ordered some whiskey, then leaned his head against the wall to hear more clearly.

As the swinging doors were flung open by some one passing from the café into the bar, the veteran saw the disturber — a short, squat, round-shouldered individual, a really ugly-looking customer, with unshaven face and lowering brows. He was clad in wide, grease-stained trousers and tattered coat and hat. There was a good deal of the German about him and also considerable of the Jew.

"Some of them moving-picture people up at Fort Lee ought to corral you, my beauty. Yuh'd make a handsome leadin' man for Mary Pickford," soliloquized Jeff.

The fellow was no other than Ericsson's assistant. Just a half-hour before, Ericsson had gone

from the lodging-house room, where they had lain under cover, to send a telephone message, leaving this man apparently sound asleep, for he snored *sawfully*. Köcher took the opportunity and stepped out for a moment too. Immediately the sleeper woke. He felt internal evidence of a pretty healthy thirst and did not stop to offer any evidence in rebuttal, but hied him to this saloon, the first one outside the martial limits, fully intending to get back in plenty of time for the signal — and here he was still.

King Alcohol makes some of his subjects loquacious and genial, some silent and sullen, others noisy and ugly, etc., etc. — many and varied are the combinations. This fellow belonged to the third class, and he stood in front of the bar, boasting drunkenly, and all the time talking with both hands like a semaphore, while he waved a greenback.

"Must belong to the Yiddish Signal Corps, the way he wigwags that Jewish flag," observed Jeff.

But his grin vanished as he heard these significant phrases mixed in a drunken goulash of threats and ravings: —

"You tink I'm dummkopf," growled the drunk at the grinning bystanders who baited

him. "To-night you vill see — all up in de air — ven de light shines in der tower dreimal — ten o'glock." Then he sank into a chair, mouthing vacantly.

"Let him rave," said the only American in the room; "he sure is seein' things."

The bartender negatively remarked: "Some schnapps is goot, but too much schnapps ain't never no goot for no man."

Jeff still leaned motionless against the wall by the swinging door, but he was tense as a piano-wire after the tuner has finished with it. He knew the man was not "seeing things." His brain worked rapidly as a machine gun: —

"What does the souse mean? He is n't crazy. He's crazy drunk, but there's some truth in it — 'up in the air' — that means explosion. 'The light in the tower' —m-m-m-m — that square-head 's" (the Swede) " in the neighborhood. This man's a pal maybe. The square-head works for Arnold — damned if it ain't the Globe Tower — It's only a hunch and I can't confirm it, for I never can wake that guy up the way he snores — Besides, the place is full of Germans — they don't suspect anything but they'll sure start something on general principles if I get after him. — It's a long chance, but it's the best

bet. — No time to notify secret service — must stop the signal — Garry? — That's it, he's due to speak at the Lexington Opera House, Sixty-something Street — the boy will do it if any one can, and I'll notify the police when I get Garry — the man said ten —

"Good God! *It's twenty of now!*"

All of which survey took Jeff one-hundredth of the time it takes to tell it.

He rose, threw down a fiver, and, without waiting for the change, hurried out as quickly as he could without exciting undue suspicion — in fact, he staggered a little to keep up the deception. Once out he found a drug-store across the street, cheap but equipped with telephone and booth.

He turned the pages of the book.

K — L — La — Lan — Len — Ler — damn — the "Lex" page was torn out.

He grabbed the red classified business book. There it is under the caption "Theatres."

No change for the slot — yes, there's a quarter — anything. If there had been a slot for a million dollars and his fingers had happened to land on it, Jeff would have dropped it in.

The coin tinkled in the box.

"Hello, Central — Hellooooooah!

"No answer. Confound it. Is the female asleep or dead?"

He almost smashed the hook, jamming it up and down with his lean brown forefinger.

At last a lazy voice.

"Number, pleeeeeeasssssee?" it drawled.

"Plaza, seven-five."

"All-rightey."

"Quick, it's a matter of life and death."

Buzzzzz —

"Is this Hackensack 804 W?"

"Get off that wire, damn you."

Jam, jam, the hook.

"Central — get me that number — Plaza."

Whirrrrrrrr!!!

A bass voice with an accent and undoubtedly a breath: —

"Is this Lichtenstein's Retail Liquor Store? Send me up one case —"

"Get off that wire —"

Jam, jam —

"Central, get me that number — Plaza seven-five — I told you it was a matter of life and death."

"Click — click —" as the plug fitted in.

A soprano voice: —

"No, dearie, I gotta nuther date."

"For the luv' o' Mike, Central, get me that number — *Plaza seven-five!!*"

Jeff sweated in that box. No, dear lady, he did not perspire — he *sweated*, good, plain, old, Anglo-Saxon sweat.

In the Eleventh Cavalry they used to say that if you'd skin and dress Old Jeff Blake you would n't find a nerve in his carcass. If he only could have *done* something, if he had depended merely on a machine gun, a horse, a Colt automatic, or those two lean brown fists of his, he would have been nerveless now, but balked by these slow contraptions of city life, with so much at stake, he felt helpless. He shifted his tall figure restlessly. There was a look of disgust on his bronzed face and that prominent Adam's apple gulped nervously.

It all would have been very funny and absurd if it had n't been so ghastly. It sounds like a farce, but it is all just the way it happened. Somehow it is always so in life. Burlesque has a habit of breaking in at the most inopportune moments. Have you never felt an uncontrollable desire to laugh at a funeral? In this topsy-turvy world the harlequin Farce always capers somewhere near, impishly thumbing his nose and wilfully stepping on the heels of Tragedy,

thereby upsetting the sorrowful dignity of that black-draped figure.

But it was all grim earnest for Jeff.

Three minutes — five minutes — nine-forty-three and no connection —

Helen stirred a trifle uneasily in one of the handsome chairs of von Arnheim's luxurious office. It was funny that Mrs. Rintelen had broken her appointment. Would she never come? That mood, so unusual with her, which had possessed her earlier in the evening — the mood of inaction, of merely drifting with the current — had vanished. She was eager to be away. She was too frank and ingenuous to be prudish but she did not particularly care to stay here much longer, even with a man of the spotless reputation Mr. Frederick Arnold bore in New York City. But she was not at all panicky. In fact, belying such a state of mind even then the ghost of a smile lurked in the corner of her beautiful mouth and her lips twitched with amusement as von Arnheim, who had pulled his chair near hers, chattered on.

"What are you smiling at, my dear lady?"

"Oh, nothing" — came her little white lie of a reply.

But it struck her as exceedingly funny, the melodramatic possibilities with which the situation bristled: young heiress alone in a tower, chaperon does not appear, man makes ardent love — what if he should imprison her here high above the world and do something desperate! This fancied rôle, so like the ancient romances and so unlike her practical, every-day life of American girl, amused her so much that she was forced to hide her mirth before it exploded in laughter behind her handkerchief. But her amusement would have vanished if she could have known the reality of the situation. And one thing she did not realize. This war has absolutely silenced captious critics of melodrama. In real life on the Western Front the haberdasher's clerk from Chelsea, London, the rookie from Salina, Kansas, every day make the creators of Nick Carter, Captain Nemo, and the pirates of Treasure Island look like half-witted Wyoming sheep-herders or dull, unimaginative subway ticket-choppers. The daily cables from over there should make even James Huneker tolerant of the movie kings and their reeling serials. Melodrama is drama since 1914.

But von Arnheim was trying with all his conversational skill to interest the girl.

He showed her the great map of the United States with its ten thousand black crosses, the massive globe by his desk, which evidenced the world-wide connections of the Company.

All this not without a purpose. He never did anything without a purpose. Like great chess-players he carefully planned and executed each move.

He said nothing about the *wealth* of the Company. Too adroit for that, he tried to drive home to the girl a sense of his *power*. This proud Prussian, like the others of the swashbuckling brotherhood of Berlin, was mad with power, drunk with it, and yet as supernaturally cool in its pursuit as Edison conducting experiments in his Orange laboratories. Oh, wonderful, complex product of German Kultur!

Still, he could not wholly suppress that gleam of triumph as he looked at his watch and saw that it lacked but twenty minutes of the hour. *His* hour, when he would reveal his might to America, to the world, to his Kaiser, to this proud, imperious girl, who sat in that chair, so disdainfully studying him with questioning eyes. It was part of his code that every human being has a purchase price. She must have hers. Her nature was strong, — she would worship power;

she would worship him in the end. (It seems as if Garry must have been right, when he said to Jeff one day, "How he does hate himself!")

How beautiful, how queenly the girl looked, von Arnheim thought, with that scarf slipping off that beautifully moulded, firm, strong shoulder! If only a sculptor could get that composition of ivory and satin, but no sculptor ever could! And on that white bosom a king might be proud to pillow his head!

That very night, his duty to the Fatherland done, his triumph achieved, he would escape overseas (oh, well he had provided for that escape!) and she would fly with him as a beautiful captive to grace his victory!

So, arrogant and suave, intoxicated with power yet cool, insane yet infinitely crafty, he revelled in his insensate megalomaniac dream. And all the while, he talked on and on in that voice, well-modulated but quivering with a triumphant ring.

"It is a wonderful organization, Miss Waldron, stretching its great arms over your country and over all the earth. And there is back of it a greater power than most people realize — the mightiest power in the world — some day you will know" — the lightning flash of truth zigzagged for a fraction of a second across her mind. She

sat bolt upright in suspicion, but the flare vanished. He noticed the movement, and skilfully changing the tenor of the conversation a little, he went on, — "*Ordinary* women are too light of mind to be interested in great affairs of business or industry, but *you*" — and his voice significantly underscored the last word — "you *understand.*"

Helen disliked that and the look that went with it. She rose with that quiet dignity which both baffled him and yet excited his intensest admiration. She was always best in a crisis.

"Strength to strength," he said to himself. "A worthy mate for a Count von Arnheim."

But the girl spoiled his dramatizations.

"Mrs. Rintelen evidently is n't coming. We'd better not wait any longer."

Throwing her scarf around her shoulders she moved towards the outer door, but he stopped her.

"Before you go, you must keep your promise," he said, not threateningly, but smilingly. "That view is one of the most magnificent in the world."

Helen thought quickly. It would only take five minutes more and Mrs. Rintelen might come in the mean time. Besides, she scorned to show

any fear of the man; in fact she had none, so she assented.

"It is up one flight of stairs," and he escorted her through another office and up a narrow stairway with that flattering, courtly grace, which, despite his fundamentally barbaric conception of women, he could assume when the occasion demanded.

So gracefully and smilingly he escorted the girl to the tower top.

The uneasiest moment in Jeff's life came to an end at a quarter of ten.

"Here's your party."

"Carnegie Hall?"

"Yes."

"Get Sergeant Owen to the 'phone, quick; it's a matter of life and death."

The wooden voice at the other end protested:

"He's on the stage, in the middle of a speech. Can't the message wait?"

"Hell! man, *I told you it was a matter of life and death.*"

"Who'll I say?"

"Tell him *Jeff!*"

Convinced at last by his earnestness, the attendant left the telephone, hurried up the stairs,

through the wings, and out on the stage, where Garry was at the most dramatic climax of his talk. The man grasped his khaki sleeve:—

"There's some one on the 'phone; says it's a matter of life and death."

"Who is it?"

"Man named Jeff."

From old experience Garry knew Jeff meant what he said.

"Tell the audience something — *anything*," said Garry, dropping the Mills bomb, with which he had been illustrating his narrative. Luckily it was unloaded, but the audience gasped. Garry made the quickest exit any stage has ever seen.

"Jeff?" he yelled into the telephone.

"Got evidence of explosion — sure it's in the Globe Tower — Arnold's office — signal three flashes — drive like hell!"

And Garry obeyed, although he hardly heard the last injunction. He got away so quickly that the telephone instrument crashed to the floor and broke in a hundred pieces, and the telephone operator, who had heard vague words about explosion or something, wildly tried to locate the trouble and then notified police headquarters and the lieutenant quickly sent out the reserves on a wild-goose chase.

Garry dashed downstairs, out through the stage entrance like a high-powered cyclone. A Flyit car stood at the curb, chauffeurless. He did n't care about the owner, but jumped to the wheel and started the gas.

The chauffeur, lounging in a near-by doorway, yelled.

A motor-cycle policeman started chugging after the flying car. But a Flyit guarantees seventy-five miles per hour to every purchaser, and Garry made that car prove that guarantee.

He shot through Fifty-sixth Street, under the L at Sixth Avenue, grazing surface cars, taxis, brewers' trucks, and pedestrians.

The night air was redolent with Gargantuan curses from the drivers, of such a brimstone quality that they almost ignited the very gasoline smell the flying car left in its wake.

Garry was not cursing — he was *blessing* Jimmy and those lessons he had given him in that red car. Garry should also have thanked his lucky stars for his own quick wit and courage in a pinch.

The car almost overturned, rounding into Fifth Avenue. At this time of night, save for a few homing motors, that thoroughfare was clear, and stretched straight ahead, shining un-

der the electric lights almost like a clear sheet of glass.

For the flash of a second, as he gripped the wheel, he smiled at a whimsical thought, almost the same identical fancy that was amusing Helen in the tower. He was like the hero in a typical movie picture. But for hero there must be a heroine. There must be a girl to save.

And immediately he gasped, a chill struck his heart. It might be more than a jest. If Arnold was concerned in this fool thing, Helen might be involved. He "would n't put it past that Boche face."

The thought almost seemed to add power to the car, as on, with teeth clenched and hands tightly gripping the wheel, he sped past the Waldorf and Thirty-third Street.

Helen laughed aloud in joy as the night wind struck her cheek refreshingly, when they at last stood on the platform of the aerial balcony.

It *was* magnificent. From their eyrie they looked out upon the night and the stars. They were so clear and bright and seemed so near that Helen fancied it would take but a short airship flight to reach them.

The myriads of roofs stretched far and near,

in varying heights, and all but a few far below them. The noises of the street died before they reached the ears of the two in the tower. The city was asleep, and yet it never slept. Even at this height the girl could almost feel the pulsations of the vast life that coursed through its arteries, that systole and diastole of the great heart of the city that never ceases. And here and there a white haze glimmered above some long cleft in the massing roofs, revealing the shining trail the pleasure-seekers followed. Southward, lanterns gleamed on other lofty sky-scrapers that stood out like fire-capped watch-towers in the night.

And two full rivers flowed on either side of the city, their currents glimmering in the night only a little brighter than their shadowy shores. At last they lost themselves in the great harbor. On the huge arches of the four bridges of the river to the east, bright rosaries of light were flung. Over the river to the west the ferries floated like golden argosies from shore to shore.

His voice broke the silence.

"You are repaid, now, Miss Waldron?"

The wonder had not left her eyes.

"Yes, yes — it is beautiful, *so* beautiful."

Above them the great lantern shone, a landmark for the great city and for fifty miles around. The roof on which it was set protected them from its glare, but its shining haze illumined the pillared balcony where they stood.

The night wind caught her filmy scarf from those gleaming, ivory-satin shoulders and carried it away, the sport of the air-currents. So white and motionless she stood, a painter would have said it was her soul that was being wafted to Heaven.

And when von Arnheim spoke to her again a painter might have chosen them as models for a wonderful painting, — he for haughty, relentless, deceitful Prussia, she the free, beautiful spirit of America.

"You can love only the strong," he said. "You should mate only with the great, the powerful of the earth."

His voice was insistent and vibrated now with a quality both iron and golden.

Like the very devil he served, he had taken her into the high places and was showing her the kingdoms of the world. And in spite of the soundness and strength of the girl's character for a moment she fell under the spell of the persuasive, masterful nature.

But only for a moment, and then she flung the answer back: —

"Yes, but only if power is on the side of right."

Again she looked below.

If only she had had a wider range of vision she might have seen the great meeting in the Garden below them. The statue of Diana which looks over the Square, still poised in her arrested flight, was as silent as ever, but the vast black roof below her reverberated to the cries and shouts of the crowd, which under the skilful manipulation of the German agents was fast degenerating into the mob that would soon sally forth into the streets, bent on destruction.

And Helen might have seen the wagons stationed in the side streets all over the city, laden with tons of the seditious circulars that were to be distributed when the signal flashed. And the thousands of bill-posters, equipped with paste-pots and brushes, ready to smear the city with their treacherous four-sheets.

Over on the Hoboken water-front were other plotters, — Köcher crouched in the shadowed yard of the lodging-house, ready to discharge the fatal spark; Ericsson in the room above, with watch in hand, his gaze fixed on the tower where Helen stood.

And some whom she held dear she might have seen: Jeff still in the booth frantically ringing that ominous number, 3900 Spring, which one never hears without a thrill, for it always means trouble or disaster — the telephone number of Police Headquarters in the great city of New York.

And Jimmy? She might have heard the tread of armed men in khaki, crowded on the piers and marching single file up the gangplanks to the great steamer, Jimmy's freckled face, serious and stern at the thought of leaving, among those of the first company.

A half-mile away the pitiful, drooping figure of poor distracted Betty huddles in the shadow of the buildings looming along the water-front, vainly trying to steal past the watchful sentries and reach the boy she loved.

And far below them Garry speeding on in his mad, arrow-like flight!

But she saw none of these things.

Von Arnheim looked at his radium watch. The glow-worm hands told nine-fifty-five.

He took out his keys and fitted them in the lock of the little metal door that guarded the switches. The bribing of another employee of the building — the electrician this time — had made this process easy.

At ten each night the great lantern was always extinguished. It was therefore a very appropriate time for the signal. To any but the plotters the three flashes would seem but dying flickerings of the light rather than a signal prearranged.

He unlocked the metal door and displayed the switch of the tower light.

And then he turned his most dastardly trick. Why he did it heaven or rather hell alone knows. It was that streak of the spectacular, perhaps. But it was foul. His way of escape had been very carefully planned. And with him he would take this proud beauty, willing, or by force if necessary. Ah! but she would be ready to go, when once she had seen the full evidence of his might — of that, in his insensate egoism, he felt sure.

Now, *if she were involved, if she were the instrument of destruction*, she would succumb the more easily through fear.

So he said to her — with such lightness and jocularity of tone: —

"The light goes out at ten. Would n't you like to turn it on again? It's very easy to work."

Girlishly she assented: —

"Why, yes, that would be lots of fun."

And blithely she hummed a little air from

"Miss Springtime," one of the popular musical comedies of the day. The words ran something like this: —

"Sympathy 's the spark
Lighting up the dark —
Love is the real, real flame."

Such a foolish little song and sung so girlishly. Little did she realize the awful aptness of that second line.

Von Arnheim looked at his watch.

Two minutes of the hour.

"Are you ready, Miss Waldron?" (It was light enough to see the switch.) "Just place your hand on the switch and when I give the word, pull it downward."

Only a minute now — but sometimes that is a lifetime.

Below the red Flyit had shot up to the curb. Garry almost literally dove to the sidewalk. He beckoned a policeman, swiftly told him the story. While the latter hid in the shadow Garry hammered at the great iron doors and shouted.

The watchman came, shaking his head.

Garry shouted again. The watchman thought he was crazy.

Garry called: "A message for Mr. Arnold — let me in."

The watchman was a simple soul. He knew nothing of the plot, and, overawed by the stranger's determination, foolishly opened the great iron doors.

With the side-arm shove of his old football days, the boy tossed the watchman aside. The policeman entered hot at his heels.

They raced into the elevator. Garry had never operated an elevator in his life, but he instinctively pulled the lever in the right way.

Up they shot. He knew there must be about forty stories in the building. And Jeff had said the office was on the top floor.

36 — 37 — 38 — 39, the numbers shot by them as they ascended. He chanced it at 40.

Luckily he was right. There was a light in the passageway revealing the name of the Liberty Insurance Company on the door.

He knocked again, gently this time so as not to arouse suspicion. One of the two watchmen on guard within opened the door. Just an inch width of his stolid face showed in the crack. Garry and the policeman with their stout shoulders widened the crack to a good two feet before he had time to recover, and bowled him over. The officer rushed for the other watchman in the inner office and kept him occupied with a

Zbyszko hold while Garry investigated the doors, of which there were no less than five in that office.

Garry tried them all and raced frantically around trying to find one with stairs that ascended. At last he found the one that opened to the tower flight.

Just above him in the balcony von Arnheim looked at his watch again — the hands glowed exactly at ten.

His hour had struck at last and proud Lucifer's face when he first led his legions against the celestial cohorts must have looked as did von Arnheim's then.

"Now."

The haze in the tower vanished. The great lantern went out.

"Up," and his hand went up with a masterful gesture.

The lantern shone over the city again.

"Down."

Again the haze in the tower was gone.

Then he showed that unerring instinct that made him the great master-spy that he was. He did not ask her to pull it a second time. He was right, for Helen asked: —

"I'm going to try it again, may I?"

She pulled the switch, and a second time the signal flashed.

Then down once more.

In sheer girlish mischief Helen would have pulled it again.

But a voice roared "Stop!" and a form, catapulting from the top of the stairway, thrust her arm aside. The force of the blow almost broke her wrist.

She cried out in fright and shrunk back against the pillar of the balcony. It had all happened in the twinkling of an eye, yet she knew well who it was.

Garry wheeled away from her to von Arnheim, but the other had reached out his arm for the switch. Before Garry could strike it aside the great lantern flashed for the third and last time.

For the boy the agony of an eternity of suspense was crowded in the fraction of a second that followed.

There was a roar as if all the thunders of heaven were loosed. The floor of the tower shook. The western sky flared blood-red, even the eastern sky glowed roseate.

Then on the Jersey shore explosion succeeded explosion so quickly it seemed as if the whole world were being destroyed. Great billows of

smoke columned up the sky and the whole heavens now were one angry sea of fire.

A fraction of a second only Garry looked at it stunned. It was not his way to stop and look when action was necessary. Instantaneously he smothered his horror and heart-break over Helen's apparent treachery and turned to cut off von Arnheim.

But that fraction of a second had been the master-plotter's margin of safety. He had the advantage of Garry for he had known what was coming and had leaped for the stairway and was already at the bottom. When Garry reached the last step the iron fireproof door clanged shut, bolted.

He shouted and beat on the door, but it was all futile. — — —

The clang of the bolt and a snarl of rage from von Arnheim on the other side of the door! Vanished now the grand manner, stripped from his face the mask he had worn. He was livid with rage, he choked with it. That he of the ancient robber race of von Arnheims, Counts of the German Empire, who had always taken by force and held what they wanted, that he who had been chosen as the craftiest among a race of supermen for this dangerous work in America,

should be outwitted by a boy — a common fellow — a mere soldier with the stripes of a sergeant, a rank whose prerogatives in the Prussian army were nothing but blows from the flat of officers' swords or kicks from their haughty boots!

Yet the man had just won his greatest victory; his mission in America had been accomplished; decorations and his master's smile awaited him in Berlin. But he had lost the proud, beautiful girl he had counted on carrying in his train.

Physical courage he did not lack. He would never have fled the tower if he had not felt that his plot had been discovered, that reinforcements were coming for Garry.

With these thoughts he did not stand still. They clicked through his brain as he hurried across the floor of the little office next the stairs, and crouched listening at the door of that unholy of unholies, the inner office where he had planned so many pleasant little affairs.

Within, the tale was told by the thud of falling chairs — the crash of a heavy vase — muttered, thick, German imprecations that died unfinished in gurgling throats — and above all the robust, stalwart cursing in an Irish accent. Pat Donohue, the bluecoat who had come with Garry, with his world's record in the discus

throw, his arms and thews of steel, was a match for the rushes of the two watchmen.

"You bloody —— take that and that!"

An inert mass crashed sickeningly against the door on the other side of which von Arnheim crouched.

There came to his ear the sound of other blows hard hammered on the door that led from the outer room to his own private office where the three fought. 3900 Spring had answered; the police reserves had come in response to Jeff's call.

With a swiftness and lightness of foot scarcely promised by his height and bulk, von Arnheim crossed the room, took out his keys, and unlocked the exit. As he had calculated, the policeman watching there, entered, and, not seeing him, flattened as he was against the wall behind the door, started to investigate the room, but the investigation was cut short by the German's revolver butt. Across the hall von Arnheim dashed. The reserves guarded all the doors, but the elevator door yawned unwatched. Into it the master-spy rushed, slammed the door in the face of the cursing bluecoats, ran it down and stopped at the eighth floor. A long hallway led through the entire building from Madison

Avenue to Fourth. It was dark, but he had well planned his escape and every step of the way he knew. Through the darkened hallway a block's length he went, and here at the end of the passage a man stood by the entrance to the waiting freight elevator.

The door closed after them and they descended slowly, at freight elevator speed, but at last they reached the ground floor, and keys which the man had ready unlocked the massive doors. They swung open, and out on Fourth Avenue the two stepped, their road clear before them.

A second only von Arnheim paused. The sky overhead was still a sea of flame; a muffled roar from the last of the explosions came to his ears, and from Twenty-third Street and over by the Garden, the bedlam of the rioters.

There was a touch on his arm. He turned, and Mrs. Rintelen stood before him. After the rioters had got under way with sufficient enthusiasm to satisfy her, she had hurried to the Madison Avenue entrance of the Globe Building and, finding it guarded by bluecoats, had gambled on finding her lover here.

"Everything went off so *beautifully, nicht wahr?*"

"Yes, yes, but we'll discuss the details some other day." And he started hurriedly towards the car at the curb, rudely throwing aside the white hand that rested on his arm.

"Where are you going?" she cried. There was a note both of alarm and command in her question.

"Don't stop me, you fool! Can't you see that they're after me?"

She had all the grace of the tawny rovers of the jungles and for others no more heart — but she had in her way loved this man. She could see that he was casting her aside and she threw pride and all to the winds. In another woman it would have been pitiful, that cry of entreaty:—

"I'll go with you!"

"No, I go alone. Your escape has been provided for — the road to Mexico is open; follow your instructions. Auf wiedersehen."

He started again towards the car, but she threw both arms around him.

"Frederick, dearest, take me with you. You know I would do anything in the world for you — that I would die for you."

He tried to shake her off, but still she clung to him. There was a sound of pounding at the doors behind them, of keys being tried in the as

yet unyielding lock. The rage which had already possessed him turned to frenzy at the delay.

Above his head he raised the revolver butt once more. Unflinching, she faced him, smiling into his eyes, with a courage and devotion worthy an infinitely better man.

"Why do you wait; did I not say I would die for you?"

His arm fell to his side. He was tired of her, and would willingly have flung her aside as he had all his various mistresses, quite as he tossed aside a cigar when the flavor began to pall. But if he left her now, she might betray him to the pursuers, who would soon force those doors. If he struck, the blow might not be fatal and that would be *unglücklich*. Bungling murders always were. And ah, besides, though he had lost the woman he coveted — that shoulder which had slipped from under the crimson satin-lined opera cloak was very white, and under the shimmering gown that body curved very alluringly — and the vessel that lay in the sea beyond might be waylaid by British cruisers and the voyage prove long and tedious — so —

"Hurry, then, you hear that!" The door behind them bulged outwardly and he almost threw her into the waiting car.

Down Fourth Avenue they sped, through Centre Street, and over to South, until they stopped in the shadow of an East River pier.

A giant ocean-going tug with steam up lay moored here. All night von Arnheim hid in the cabin, soothing away, with fragrant Havana and good champagne, which with the usual Teutonic efficiency had been provided for him, to say nothing of the feminine fragrance and languorous wiles of the fascinating Mrs. Rintelen, all memories of the late little unpleasantness. And they stayed very carefully under hatches when at daybreak the tug puffed down the river, over the harbor, and out through the Narrows, then forty miles to sea, where a raider, one of the fortunate few that had ever escaped from Kiel, patrolled the waters in obedience to a little wireless message from the old barn back of Fort Lee, awaiting the distinguished guest. The ship hove to and took them on board. Fair was the sea and favoring the breeze as they sailed away to their rewards and decorations.

Far above the street, at the base of the tower steps, Garry had hammered upon the door after it clanged bolted behind von Arnheim. But no

one answered. Then, stunned and bruised in body and spirit, he staggered up the stairs.

He turned on the girl: —

"And *you* did this thing!"

The flames from the Jersey shore, turning night into Judgment Day, clearly revealed her figure, as she leaned back against the pillar, motionless, her eyes wide and staring turned on the flaming west, one arm thrown up, with the hand, palm outward, flung in a gesture of horror against her lips.

She answered never a word.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NIGHT COURT

At last they came, but not in the rôle of rescuers.

Not one syllable did the lieutenant in charge of the squad waste in questions. One glance at the two in the Tower — Garry standing staring at the girl, she at the flaming west — and they were handcuffed. Then, with the two watchmen, they were dragged through the offices, bundled into the elevator, and thrown like East-Side gangsters into the patrol wagon which sped at a forty-mile rate through the crowded streets, bowling over frenzied rioters who would not heed the alarm. With a jar that almost threw the occupants on the floor, the driver at last stopped in front of two ancient green lights which guarded the doorway of the Night Court.

Here in the dirty room, smelling of all races, all vices, and crimes, they were thrown with the Tenderloin flotsam and jetsam. To the rear, leering at the girl in her high-bred beauty were spectators, that is, all who had not fled to the streets at the sound of the explosion. To Helen's right was an unshaven citizen with

bloodshot eyes and gashed scalp, one half of his collar in proper place, the other half waving like some ludicrous flapper. As ships entering the war-zone protect themselves with enveloping clouds of smoke, he had guarded himself from intrusion by the fumes of alcohol, which thoroughly enveloped his shabby person.

To the left was a group of Daughters of Joy, pathetically misnamed — some fat, red-faced, cheap-scented, and decorated with billowing plumes on their hats; others fast withering, the bright red lights in their cheeks scarcely concealing the ravages of Time and Disease; and one or two slender figures girlishly clad, the mockery and cynicism of their old, old eyes giving the lie direct to their seeming youth and innocence. Daughters of Joy? Daughters of Sorrow, rather! And in the eyes of all that unholy sisterhood, all save the youngest, were derision and envious glee at the entrance into their circle of this beautiful girl with her air of breeding and purity.

The police lieutenant passed up the aisle and through the gate that barred the rabble from the sacred enclosure where reigned the high functionaries of Justice — the machine-like clerk, the court constable glorying in his dignity,

and His Honor himself, a heavy-jowled, heavy-jawed, and heavy-paunched Irishman who sat and glared at the four, unblinkingly and vindictively. There seemed little mercy for them in those eyes.

The two Teutons shrank cravenly in their seats, but Garry and Helen neither spoke nor moved. She was powerless. And he — he did n't care, now, what happened to him. The idol he had worshipped had been broken; the beautiful illusion was forever spoiled.

All his long agony when he lay wounded in No Man's Land held no suffering like this.

These thoughts revolved in his mind, at first slowly, but then, like a motor gathering impetus, they circled swiftly and more swiftly. Of her guilt he was certain. The deed proved that beyond a doubt. Was it not her hand that had pulled the lantern switch, although von Arnheim had given the last fatal signal himself? And was she not alone with *him* in the tower? It meant treason and murder and the death of so many of her countrymen. She herself deserved death. But could *he, Garry*, send her to her doom?

Although they sat handcuffed side by side, they had not looked at each other; still he could

as clearly see, as if his eyes had been fastened on her, the beauty of the girl, her utter pathos. Her whole loveliness penetrated his very being. He had loved her. It was his fate to go on loving her — forever, perhaps — he did not know. And his testimony alone would condemn her. He alone had seen her hand on the switch. Her presence with von Arnheim was suspicious enough, but *that one fact*, to which he could and should bear witness, was the only thing that could convict her of treason and murder, and those crimes meant — *death*. Good God in heaven — could he do *that?* Could he speak the word that would send the woman he had loved to her *death?*

The court-room was becoming crowded and groups of rioters were being brought in from the street. Quickly the disorderly conduct hearing, under way when they entered, was finished and the drunk hustled out of the court into the cell.

Then the officer led Garry and Helen and the two watchmen through the gate and to the platform above which loomed the high desk and the judge.

Swiftly and with as much excitement as an imperturbable veteran police lieutenant ever

shows, the complaint was made. Garry suddenly awoke, which means that his faculty of arising to a crisis very effectively showed itself. With that bright, compelling magnetism which had charmed so many gatherings of both high and low degree and which always inspired confidence, he identified himself with various papers, passes, etc., and told his story.

Then he gave his name — Sergeant James Garrison Owen. At this the judge smiled and thawed. The little fighting sergeant had achieved considerable fame by this time, with his speeches, his book, his recruiting rallies, and the splendid help he had given the Red Cross and Liberty Loan drives. In fact, the judge suddenly remembered hearing him at Carnegie Hall and also recalled his appearance before him earlier in the year, as a complainant against a man who later was indicted by the Federal Grand Jury and proved a notorious spy.

"Lieutenant, you've made a mistake in Sergeant Owen's case. Release him." And then he questioned Garry quickly about the events of the night.

Briefly Garry told of Jeff's telephone message to the Lexington Opera House.

"Your Honor, that must have been the man

who 'phoned Headquarters from Hoboken," explained the lieutenant. "What was his name?"

"Jefferson Blake, sergeant of the Eleventh Cavalry."

"That's the man, Your Honor!"

"State briefly, Sergeant Owen, what you saw in the tower," the judge demanded.

"We reached the offices of the Insurance Company. Pat Donohue, the policeman with me, took good care of the two watchmen while I found the stairway to the tower. I reached the top — and then" — he stopped; the muscles under that slight out-thrust of jaw were suddenly taut; the scar on the temple fiery red — "I saw — this lady — and Arnold, the General Manager of the Company. It was dark so it was hard to see clearly—" Here Garry paused again. His decision was made.

"Yes, go on," gruffly demanded His Honor.

"I started for them and — the switch was pulled."

"What switch?"

"The electric switch that turned on the light; it was evidently the signal for the explosion, for it followed at once."

"Who pulled the switch?"

There was another pause, while every eye

watched the boy's grim face. With an effort he smoothed every trace of emotion from his face and answered very clearly and naturally: —

"Frederick Arnold."

For a second there flickered in Helen's tragic eyes far-off, faint lights of joy, not at her rescue, but because *he* had tried to protect her. But only for a brief space, then the light died. She was too far gone and relapsed into a state almost of collapse, supported on either side by two policemen.

"Arnold! Where is this Arnold?" roared the judge.

A few sentences and Garry explained the escape.

Garry was free, but the judge held the two watchmen for examination before the United States Commissioner in the morning, and they were sent to their cells.

As for Helen, she was so far saved from the charge of treason, a capital crime, but on suspicion the court also remanded her for a hearing before the United States Commissioner and that meant jail overnight, unless five thousand dollars bail should be forthcoming. Then — later the Federal Grand Jury would deal with her, and perhaps not gently.

Again Garry's slightly out-thrust jaw was set.

She was guilty, but he had loved her and would protect her. But how? — He had with him only a little cash. His lecture manager, King — that was it.

Permission to telephone was granted him.

In the Lexington Opera House box office, like a veritable king in his counting-house counting out his money, Garry's lecture manager sat with the house manager, piles of coins and greenbacks and tickets and tabulated sheets all about them. Fortunately King had skilfully held the audience after Garry's sudden exit. The lecture had been about over and when the sounds of the explosion followed, the audience had crowded excitedly to the street, so few had demanded their money back.

"'Phone for you, Mr. King," the house manager said.

"Hello, who is it?"

"Garry Owen. How much money have you got?"

"About four thousand dollars in the house. I have n't counted it all yet."

"Can't you raise any more?" Garry's voice at the other end insistently asked.

"I have six hundred of my own. Why, what's all the trouble?"

"Never mind — bring all you've got along. I've got a hundred, and three Liberty Loan bonds. That'll make it. Bring it to the Night Court and quick —"

"The Night Court! Well, I'll be — What have you done now?"

There was no answer, and the frantic manager, with visions of a rich lecture trip vanishing into thin air, with his star behind the bars, nevertheless seized a large black grip, and with both hands hastily scooped all the currency on the table into it, then bolted for a taxi.

When he reached the court Helen had collapsed and was in the matron's care.

It was the only touch of humor in the grim night's proceedings — the worried manager with beads of perspiration on his brow, counting up before the puzzled court the contents of the grip, from dimes to one lonely fifty-dollar bill. The manager's wallet and Garry's, together with the three Liberty Bonds, made the total with twenty-three dollars and seventeen cents to spare.

So Helen was free for the time, though still under surveillance. But no one could tell what the future held for her.

So Garry thought as from the shadows he

watched her, pale and with sinking head, pass under the green lamps to a taxi-cab. Then, seated between two guards, she was driven rapidly home.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TOLL

The purple of night at last paled to grey, then brightened to gold, and the sun came up.

Usually in the well-ordered Waldron household its light did not disturb the slumberers, but in the panic of the fearful night before, the shades had not been drawn. The sunbeams fell on Helen's pale face, sought out their fellow-gold that mingled with the brown in the disordered tendrils of her hair, and crept down that graciously curved figure, from which she had not removed the light evening dress. After the two plain-clothes men had brought her home, she had fallen prone on the bed in sheerest fatigue and abasement of spirit. Pitying slumber had come to her relief at last, and she had slept the sleep of the innocent, for such she surely was in spite of her self-judgment and harrowing remorse.

The sun-rays pried open those still pale lids. As flocks of bubbles rise to the surface of a clear well when some pebble has been dropped into its depths, so from the shadowy depths of slumber

the thoughts rose to the surface of her clear eyes. But then, so different it was from the first awakening on other mornings she shuddered and the events of the night before came back to her with cruel vividness — the flame in the west, the thunderous roar, the madness of the rioters.

Even now she recoiled with a moan as the sharp ringing of a gong told of another load of maimed being brought from Hoboken, whose hospitals were already full.

Why had she not listened to Garry? He had warned her. Why had she trusted that arch-criminal? She had been stupidly, *wickedly* foolish. *Her* hand had started the first flashes of the signal that had brought death to those poor boys. She was a traitor and had betrayed her own countrymen. And even then the thought she despised as selfish would creep in — she had forever lost the respect of the one man who had most influenced her life!

Early as it was, they were selling extras on the streets. The hoarse cries of the newsboys shouting the latest bulletins — "Uxtry! Uxtry! Turrible loss of life! Five hundred soldiers killed! Read all about the explosion and the spies!" — came through her window.

Her body shivered through all its beautiful

length in a spiritual anguish that could not find comfort. If she could only have helped in ministering to the wounded, but they would not let her help; they would spurn her; she with blood upon her hands. And instinctively in her distraction she held out one before her. The sunlight slanted through the window and was refracted through a ruby-colored Tiffany vase that stood on the dresser. As she studied her hand the crimson lights fell on its whiteness. She almost shrieked, and thrusting it half savagely into her mouth, bit deep until the actual crimson came.

Under her window a figure approached the house, a stooping figure, with hat pulled down over the forehead almost to the brows, with collar turned up to avoid recognition. As he stood on the threshold, fumbling in his pocket for the latch-key, two citizens who had been strolling near the house, apparently very aimlessly, stepped up and saluted him by tapping him on the shoulder.

"Mr. Waldron, Headquarters wants you; you are under arrest."

They had found him out at last. And he had imagined himself so secure. It was the terrible fascination the place of the crime has for the

criminal that had brought him back. Hell could hold no worse terrors than last night's ride in the sleeper from Washington.

As with all but the most hardened criminals, there had been a terrible conflict in his soul before he had yielded to temptation and sold himself for German gold to the Kaiser and that ultimate Man-Higher-Up, the Devil himself. Then for a space after the fall, his conscience had lain dormant. He had even smoked and read the paper complacently on the first hour of the trip. But some stranger coming into the smoking compartment brought the first news of the crime and Waldron's conscience at last awoke, like a tortured nerve when the opiate's influence has gone. It is strange, that drug of the spirit which the Tempter leaves with the victim the moment he yields. Its influence lasts until the commission of the crime and then wears off so quickly. At midnight Waldron lay in his berth. Through the window he could see other trains race by. The fireman of one, feeding the flames in the red-hot fire-pit, became his very self; the fuel he fed that fiery maw the soldiers of his own country. The interminable noises of the train, — the roar of the engine, the pounding of the rails, the grinding of trucks

and brakes, and the demoniac whistle shrieking in the night like a lost soul — all these his frenzied brain translated into the hideous sounds of a vast explosion and the pitiful shrieks of his tortured victims.

So insanely had he cried aloud that the porter came running and thrust his head between the curtains of the berth and tremblingly asked what the matter was. He had collected himself sufficiently to mutter something about a nightmare. At dawn he had frantically pulled on his clothes, and hurried from the station, like a hunted fugitive, to the house.

As Helen lay there in the sunshine with her bitter thoughts, she did not hear her father enter with the two detectives. She did not hear him excuse himself for a moment on the plea of getting some things from his room before he left with them prisonward.

When he went to the room he had planned the only mortal way of escape, but his failing courage thwarted him, that or the presence of the detectives, who, suspicious of this very thing, had followed him up the stairs.

So they haled him away on the first steps of the long journey to Atlanta, the whole attitude of the huddled figure, as they almost dragged

him down the steps, so eloquently symbolic of the utter collapse of a career that had promised so richly.

It was fortunate that Helen was spared this picture at least, for she was fighting desperately against utter despair. Now, perhaps more than at any other moment of her life, her splendid courage, backed by her superb vitality, showed itself.

Clenching her hands until the nails cut deep into the satin of her palms, she muttered as she walked unsteadily back and forth, striving desperately for control: —

"I must not give in, I *must not!* If I do, I shall go insane. I am half that way now. I must save something from the wreck. And Betty!"

For the first time in her anguish the thought of her little sister came to her. Quickly she dashed showers of cold water over her face and hands. Its clear shock and stimulus steadied her and she arranged her disordered hair and dress, then went to Betty's room.

The pillows were undisturbed, as were so many others in the great city on this night of sorrow.

The silver-framed photograph still lay on the bed, where Betty had left it when she had hur-

ried to the telephone for Jimmy's message; the foolish little handkerchief, crumpled into a little ball, lay near it.

Two hours later they brought Betty home for the last time. The falling beam, which had crushed her as she rushed in her mad flight past the sentries to reach Jimmy when the great ship went up, had not marred the loveliness of that face.

With infinite tenderness they placed her still form upon the bed, and somehow they forgot to remove the silver-framed photograph and the foolish little handkerchief.

The bright sparkle in those black eyes was quenched, but even in death the black-bobbed curls beautifully framed her childlike face, and she lay almost as if smiling, yes, smiling, for she had found her boy again.

And when three days afterwards, the cortège wound around the lovely hills of the Moravian Cemetery, from which one can see the blue serenity of the ocean beyond, on the slow-moving gun-carriage were two forms and both were flag-draped.

For Helen had asked: "Can you not allow my

sister's body to be carried in the military funeral, too, so that they can be buried together? They loved each other so."

Although it was unusual, the officer on Governor's Island, to whom she had gone, could not resist her plea and gave his consent. Some one — no one knew who, although Old Jeff had been noticed earnestly talking with the lieutenant a few moments before — had thrown the flag over Betty's form as well as the boy's, and the three salutes were fired and the last call of the bugle sounded for the girl who had gone as well as for the soldier she had loved.

So they laid them to rest in the beautiful Staten Island hills by the sea.

In the hills, yes, but somewhere Jimmy is happy, still with that red hair and freckles — surely God would not change them. They were so much a part of Jimmy. They *must* have their celestial counterpart. And Betty — surely He would not quench forever that sparkle in those eyes, or at least that spiritual something of which they were the lovely earthly evidence.

CHAPTER XIX

THE STORM

After the hearing before the United States Commissioner, the Federal District Attorney had taken charge of Helen's case and presented it with those of the plotters they had corralled, at a special session of the Federal Grand Jury. Köcher, Ericsson, and the man who had unwittingly given the cue to Jeff in the Hoboken bar-room on the night of September first, were charged with murder in the first degree. Mrs. Rintelen's two blonde assistants and Spiegel, the editor, were indicted under the espionage laws, and a host of lesser fish were included. It had been a good haul, although the chief prizes of all had escaped the meshes of the secret service and were now far beyond these waters.

Not a shred of evidence could the District Attorney's office present pointing to Helen Waldron's actual complicity in the plot, but an abundance of witnesses could be found to testify to her frequent appearances in public with von Arnheim and Mrs. Rintelen — and she was the daughter of an official high in the War

Department, now a publicly branded traitor. They dismissed the gravest charges and indicted her for espionage, a charge which the secret locked deep in Garry's heart might change at any time to those of treason and murder, with their penalties of everlasting dishonor and death. But Garry so far had held that secret.

On the fifteenth of the month the Grand Jury met, and at dinner-time Helen heard the news.

The night of this fifteenth of September was like all the others that had so slowly run their course since the tragic first — fitful, dream-haunted respites of sleep, then the interminable periods between when she faced thoughts even more harrowing than her dreams.

A little before midnight she woke and slowly opened her eyes. A book which she had been trying to read before she fell asleep lay still open beside the bed whose unwonted disorder betrayed her restless tossing. The reading-lamp had not been extinguished and its soft glow fell full on her features, still damp with the sweat of her agony.

She sat up. Everything was so still in the great house. She clenched her hands and looked into the darkness outside the illumination of

the reading-lamp. Because of its soft, glowing contrast the shadows seemed even darker and haunted with memories that took shape and mocked her. She tried to steady herself, to believe it was all a dream. Then suddenly in the silence of the house, the clock began to strike the midnight hour. In her half-conscious state the first two strokes mingled with the dream-sounds still echoing in her ears. But on the third she began to count with beating heart: —

"One — two — three —" in ominous precision — " four — five — six — seven" — her counting, dull at first, had now a high-pitched hysterical note — "eight — nine — ten!"

It stopped.

And she heard the voice in the tower: —

"The lantern is extinguished at *ten.* Would you not like to turn it on?"

Then she fairly screamed.

A little later she sank into a brief fraction of an hour's slumber.

She woke again, and suddenly sat up in the attitude almost of a child listening, and she smiled like a child as she heard — a little silvery snatch of laughter — a bar or two of lilting song — and over the polished floor the patter of silken slippers — Yes, *they were, they were* —

Betty's footsteps! Betty's voice! Her arms were stretched wide. "Betty! Betty!" — Then the song and the footsteps ceased altogether.

Only her glorious vitality and underlying strength of character held her life and reason safe through the storm of those terrible weeks. Remorse, the feeling of blood-guiltiness, her father's shame, her grief over the death of Jimmy and the little sister she had mothered so long, and the loss of Garry's respect and love, in wave after wave struck and almost engulfed her. But though blinded and staggering in the storm, descending into the bottomless trough of the seas, somehow her will-power and Destiny kept her hand to the wheel, her eyes fixed on the compass of Faith, though it glimmered but feebly in the darkness. She did not founder; she was not driven on the rocks. She held the ship to its course and bravely rode out the storm.

The fifteenth was the last of those tortured nights. If they had continued, her reason, probably her life, would have snapped.

But in the calm that came with the morning's light she saw at last that, after all, she was innocent, a mere instrument in the hands of von Arnheim and of Fate, that the crime would

have been committed had she been far from the scene. No more could she have stayed the destruction than a fragile bird of the air, dashing against the great lantern that gave the dread signal, could have extinguished its light.

And so she said to herself again: —

"I must try and save something from the wreck. Perhaps the way will be opened so that I can help in the great fight across the seas."

Her sorrow over Jimmy and Betty lost some of its poignancy. Otherwise she could not have borne it. And she tried to convince herself of, and indeed came to believe, this: —

"What would have been gained if Betty had lived? Disgraced by her father, deserted by friends, fortune gone, the troubles of war ahead, and old age and perhaps disillusion yet to come. As it was, they died, not knowing any of these things, after one long beautiful year of happiness and young love."

As for Garry — resolutely she shut all thoughts of him out of her mind. That beautiful friendship, she felt, was forever ended. And she faced the one reality of the present, the trial now set for October seventh.

Jeff's call was opportune. He came that afternoon (the afternoon of the sixteenth of Sep-

tember), and his genial kindliness and manly sympathy, and the cheer he radiated, helped to strengthen the resolutions which she had made in the morning.

She had nervously wandered from her room to the hall and over the balcony heard voices, one the nervous soprano of her elderly maiden aunt who had come from the West to help (with indifferent success, it should be explained, because of her fluttering, nervous solicitude over Helen's condition), the other the deep bass of Old Jeff.

"I am sorry, Mr. Blake, but my niece is worn out. She is unable to see any one. I'll give her your message."

"I'm sure sorry to hear that bad news, ma'am; will you please tell her —"

They both turned as Helen's voice from the upper hall stopped them: —

"Auntie, please tell Mr. Blake I'll be right down."

The former protested: —

"But, my dear, you're not able —"

For reply Helen herself appeared on the stairs. She came down slowly, and the eyes of Jeff were filled with grave and kindly concern as he gazed at the black dress with its slight touch of white

at the neck and wrists, the pallor in the cheeks where always color had been, the shadows under the beautiful eyes.

She beckoned him to a chair by the library window, through which the wind came, gently billowing the curtains. In its whisper was the first hint of fall, presaging the death of the year. Outside, on the one tree left on the street, a few leaves danced for the last time in their now deserted homes, then accomplishing their demise in that gentle way of theirs, the gentlest of all things in the world, floated dreamily to their last resting-place.

As she watched them, Helen almost wished that she too might go like the leaves. But immediately she straightened her shoulders and banished the thought as unworthy.

"I just dropped in to tell you, ma'am, that—" and here Jeff awkwardly halted and gazed intently into the crown of his hat as if he hoped he might there find the exact phrase he had been looking for. He wanted so much to say the right thing. She was touched and a little amused, even in her sorrow, at his embarrassment. Unsuccessful in his search, he finally wound up lamely with: —

"I just dropped in to tell you, ma'am, that

I'd like yuh to know I was your friend — I mean any man in the world would be *proud* to have you call him friend."

"Thank you, Jeff; I appreciate your coming to tell me that — very much." Her voice lingered charmingly on the last words. Long afterwards their music echoed through Jeff's memory.

He smiled, and Jeff's smile was good to see. Always it seemed to say: "I'm not long on talk, but my heart's right there, and the latchstring's always out for my friends."

If you had told him that, he would have scorned any such spilling over of sentiment, but it was true just the same, and exactly the way Helen interpreted the smile.

Jeff indulged in no idle expressions of sympathy. It was not his way nor hers. He simply tried to be of practical assistance.

"Would you mind my saying that if you need help, I'd consider it a real honor for you to allow me to help you, Miss Helen? You see, I've found out what that skunk of a —" He stopped short, his bronzed face reddened slightly and the prominent Adam's apple gulped nervously; although Waldron deserved the worst of epithets, still he was her father. "I beg your pardon — I mean — I have a ranch out West and

a couple of thousand or so laid away, that an old trooper like me ain't no exact use for. And yuh need good lawyers and lawyers' charges are like income taxes — it takes about a mile of lead pencils and a whole section of paper to figger 'em, and when yuh've figgered it all out, there ain't no income left, only the taxes. Now, it would make me feel mighty pleased if you'd let me help you a little."

Helen would have stopped him before he got so far, but she could hardly speak. There was no foolish hurt pride in this, she simply was touched. Her mouth and eyes were tremulous. When she did speak, it was only to say this, but with the best sort of eloquence: —

"Jeff, you're *true blue.*"

After a little space she went on, struggling for control: —

"But you see, Jeff, that is all fixed for a while. The bail" — for a second she averted her eyes at this ominous term with which she was forced to brand herself as a criminal or at least a criminal suspect — "has been arranged for. Mr. Owen did that — although I know he feels I am guilty." Again she struggled for self-control. "We have a very good friend in Cleveland who came on to New York the minute he heard of

my trouble — almost literally the very minute, for he threw up all his business and caught the Twentieth Century east. He knew Mother — she was a Cleveland girl, you know. I think he was in love with her before she married and never really got over it."

She looked out of the window, thinking, perhaps, how different from her real father he would have been.

"And this friend — Judge Evans is his name — has done everything in the world. He tried to reimburse Mr. Owen for the money, but he got very angry. He — he does n't understand." Again the lips and voice trembled, then she went on: "Judge Evans is coming back three days before the trial. He is the sort of man you would admire and he would like you."

Jeff smiled all over.

"That's good news. I'd like to help but law is worse than barbed wire to me. A man like the Judge can fix up things pretty quick for yuh. The trouble'll all be over before we know it."

And all the time Jeff's kindly, quizzical eyes studied her face, which had not lost its loveliness — only a little of the pride of bearing, the old mysterious look of inquiry, had gone. Life's answer to her question had been shattering.

No higher compliment Jeff could have paid her than his silent comparison of her to a horse he had once prized. He admired intensely her thoroughbred air and breeding. He remembered the last race of his favorite and the gameness with which the noble little animal had finished it. Halfway beyond the seven-eighths mark, his right fore-leg had snapped above the fetlock, and yet he had galloped home a winner. Suffering there was in the girl's eyes, but she *was game*, Jeff said to himself.

It was a very beautiful thing, this love of Jeff for Helen. Yes, he had fallen in love with her, though not quite in the usual way. The love he had for her was the admiration of a man's man for a woman who has the sterling qualities that one who has seen life in the raw knows are the only ones that count. There was also in his love a hint of that he might have felt if he had been younger and what he called worthy of her. But there was in it more of the fatherly, the elder-brotherly. And with it all went the wish that she and the boy he loved might be happy together. He would have given his life to achieve that.

She had hoped that he would tell her something of Garry. Twice she had mentioned his

name, but Jeff had volunteered no information.

He could n't very well speak of Garry. Poor lovable, stubborn, misguided Garry!

When Jeff saw him again that night he was hopeless still.

"Garry, I've been to see Helen to-day, and say, boy, you're dead wrong about that girl."

The boy winced as if Jeff had struck a live nerve — then he said wearily: —

"What's the use of milling that over? Did n't I see her hand on that signal? Did n't I see her alone in the tower with von Arnheim? I tell you she fell for that Boche's rotten work. And she helped to kill a lot of her own countrymen just as a little token of her love for him."

"For the luv' o' Mike, be reasonable. You're about as sensible as one of those hee-haw half-hawsses. Be reasonable for just about five minutes, Garry, and I'll explain the whole thing to you. It's plain as day." Here Jeff put his arm around the boy's shoulder affectionately. "You see, Garry, that trial's a-comin' off pretty soon now. It's set for the first week in October, and you'll have to testify against her. For God's sake, don't go on the stand, prejudiced against

the girl you love! And 'way down in your heart you know you love her still!"

Although he did not realize it, Jeff had thrust the knife in, clean up to the hilt, and was twisting it around. Jeff was right. Garry's love for Helen had been deeper than he knew. The blow had stunned him the first few days. Round and round like a panther in a cage his reason had circled, seeking for some escape to the free outside air of his old, glorious, buoyant faith in her. Always just and fair and innately chivalrous, his sober reason would long before this have acquitted her if his mind had not been clouded by his insensate jealousy of the German spy. As a matter of fact, Jeff had told him, and very aptly, too, "That damned Boche had gassed him." Garry had finally lapsed into the listless, sullen mood that still possessed him this night. So many times Jeff, in gentleness or in anger, had tried to argue with him, but every attack failed. So when in answer to Jeff's last remark the boy said, "I tell you when I'm done with people, I'm done with them," the former, in absolute exasperation, roared: "I tell yuh, you're plumb loco."

"Remember, Jeff, you're not conducting any court-martial on me. Good-night."

It was the first time his bunkie had ever parted from him like this, and as Jeff stood at the door he shot out one syllable: —

"You —" Then he stopped without finishing it. Now, Jeff had in his memory a regular storehouse of phonograph records, all chosen for their choice sulphurous qualities. He had them all labelled and pigeon-holed very accurately. He could pick out a record that would suit any and every trying occasion and render it to the king's taste, or rather to the more experienced taste and the roaring delight of D Troop, Eleventh Cavalry, a flock of sheep-herders in from the range on their semi-annual spree, or a snarl of truck-drivers colliding on Canal Street.

But he could find no record suitable for such utterly incomprehensible conduct as Garry's, so he stopped short.

However, a little later in his room, his exasperation cooled. He loved the boy and as he rolled a cigarette with long, skilful fingers, he said to himself: "Never mind, he's a good kid and he'll wake up."

It was not so incomprehensible, after all, this stubbornness of Garry, but altogether human and natural and, yes, even lover-like. And it was both absurd and tragic. Up in his room he

paced back and forth, back and forth, rolling and lighting an endless number of fags, each for a second's whiff, then a toss into the corner or on the floor, until the whole room was murky with smoke, the carpet pocked with little brown holes, and the room looked as if a legion of nicotine-loving Tommy Atkinses had camped there for the night.

And through the smoke-haze in the room and the deeper mists that clouded his mind, grisly shapes and spectres laughed and mocked at him.

Long, long after midnight his soul faced these things and wrestled with them. The girl he loved — and, yes, still loved — was on trial — on trial, perhaps, for her life! And they would try and drag from him the truth that would send her to her death!

Grimly he set his jaw.

CHAPTER XX

GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY

THE constable of the court, far more conscious of the high dignity of his office than the black-robed judge, the masterful attorney, or even the twelve men good and true in the jury-box, moved with his long pole from high window to high window, to see that each admitted the maximum of air, for it was frightfully hot, one of those sultry early fall days that once in a generation make the worst of July seem frigid. His Honor delved frequently in the balloon wings of his black gown for his handkerchief, the jurymen wielded their palm-leaf fans, and rivulets of perspiration played havoc with the make-ups of the ladies who had deserted the cabarets, and even motored in from the summer resorts, for the entertainment here provided at the expense of the girl in mourning, with bright-brown hair and grey-blue eyes, who sat at the table with her counsel, the famous lawyer from the Middle West, Judge Evans.

He was a spare, but very tall and very erect, figure, with thinning, grey-sifted hair, fine

features, and dark, deep-set eyes, whose most characteristic expression was a mixture of irony and sweetness of humor. The newspapers had made much of the case, not only because it was very important, but because it was so rich in that reporters' gold, "human interest." It was really much richer than the gentlemen of the press thought. They had worked it from the spy, the Judas, the society, the beauty, and all the usual angles; still much valuable copy was going to waste; but then how could they know Garry's romance or the thirty-year-old love-story of Judge Evans, hidden so carefully from the world, even from Helen, he himself thought, though here he was badly mistaken. How much faster their pencils would have travelled over the rough copy-paper, although they were already going at a pretty rapid pace, if they could have looked into Garry's heart and sensed the struggle there, or if they could have envisaged the picture the defendant's counsel saw. Not Helen Waldron on trial for her life, but one quite like her in form and feature, dressed in the fashion of a generation back, — Eleanor Crittenden, on that night when she told him that she had plighted her troth to Thomas Waldron. He could almost feel that hand, as he turned away from her in a

sorrow he could not hide, steal out and clasp his own in pitying sympathy. He could even smell the fragrance of the porch honeysuckle crushed out by her slim shoulder as she leaned against the pillar — But they were already droning through the dull daily preliminaries to this intense drama and the scene changed to the old stuffy, crowded court-room once more.

Three torrid days had already sweltered by. Very skilfully he had built up Helen's case, until many thought it was proof against the keenest inquisitor.

All the subordinate plotters and the employees of the Globe Building, Red Cross helpers, and Helen's acquaintances, had been examined. None gave the slightest scintilla of evidence that would substantiate any knowledge on the defendant's part of the great plot. Under the adroit questioning of Judge Evans, the two blonde assistants of Mrs. Rintelen at her Red Cross Workroom in silken sullenness confessed the injection of ground-glass and poison in the bandages and dressings, a gentle little trick of which Arnold was the original inventor. The ingenious machine used for their purpose was introduced as an exhibit. Witnesses from the Red Cross Workroom of which Helen was in charge attested

its absolute efficiency and freedom from this ghastliness.

Even the doorman at the Globe Building entrance stolidly admitted seeing her hesitate before ascending to the tower with von Arnheim, and hearing her say something about waiting for Mrs. Rintelen on that night.

All the prosecution had so far proven was her occasional appearances with von Arnheim.

But as the hours wore on the current changed. Persistence was a trait prominent in the Federal Attorney's make-up. Undeterred by the frequent objections of the counsel for the defence, the former tried to prove, through various of his witnesses, some connection or connivance between Helen and her father, whose guilt was now a matter of public knowledge. He was a very clever examiner, and it was evident to a skilled reader of jurymen's faces that his assault was influencing the twelve who sweltered in the box.

In the afternoon Garry was called to the stand as a witness for the defence. At first Helen did not look at him directly, but when his face was turned towards her lawyer, she studied him, not with the frank gaze of old, but timorously, almost pleadingly. And forgetful of self even

in her own hour of peril, she noticed with a rush of sympathy, that beautiful evidence of the maternal which is in all good women, that when he entered the room the spring was gone from that cavalryman's stride of his, and now on the stand his face was care-worn, the old ruddiness gone. A bitter, almost dogged, expression had taken the place of the boyish smile that every one loved.

With a heart-twinge he could not smother, Garry's quick observant gaze noted, when her head was averted, the evidence of her sufferings, the thinner outline of those exquisite features, which no emotion of the trial now seemed to kindle. Oh, if he could only erase the memories of that night so that those eyes could smile on him in the old way, as no other woman's in the world had ever smiled. Even now they seemed full of candor and of courage. Nor did they falter, except once when her full gaze met his. Then their effect was so poignant that he felt as if their plea would have reached him from the ends of the world.

He faltered in his belief of her guilt, but a little later, in his harassed condition of mind, the old doubts came back and he did not look at her again.

The cross-examination began.

Back and forth the questions and answers crossed and criss-crossed, all centring now about that tower and the fateful thirty seconds that elapsed between Garry's ascent to the tower top and the explosion.

The District Attorney had a clue. This clue was gained simply from his uncanny shrewdness in divining that Garry was concealing something that took place in one of those thirty seconds.

Now, this soldier of fortune had fought his way around the world, in the trenches, on the frontier, in the Philippines, and on the high seas. His wits had been sharpened in too many a rough-and-tumble fight and unusual encounter to make him an easy prey to the attorney's legal wiles. He was cool, collected, and alert. He side-stepped every pitfall.

The cross-examiner had a habit of wheeling, as suddenly as a cow-pony rounding up a refractory steer, and shooting a question with a sudden sharpness that upset the ordinary witness. As he wheeled, his eyes narrowed suddenly. Helen watched these mannerisms and fairly hated them. Her sympathy was so keen for the boy that she suffered even more than he. She could see that he was guarding that secret. Why, she

could not tell, for that one glance had shown that he doubted her still. It must be his inborn chivalry, the strong man's protection of the weak, all of which but made her love him the more.

There he sat, blocking the questions that were fired as rapidly as machine-gun bullets, it seemed to the anxious girl. It was almost a crouching attitude into which he had fallen, the jaw had the look of a prize-fighter now, and Garry had won many a bout in the Army and in his voyages around the world. As carefully as the skilled pugilist guards the vulnerable spot, he guarded the secret he was carrying. Guilty, Helen might be; but for the love he had borne her, no district attorney would ever worm that evidence out of him.

So all that the cross-examiner had gained was the fact that Helen had been present with Frederick Arnold in the tower. Repeatedly Garry answered that *Arnold's* hand was on the switch; that *Arnold's* hand had pulled the signal.

Still the prosecutor persisted. In the rear of the court-room Jeff glared at him wrathfully, now and then sottovociously addressing him by unparlorlike but excusable captions which are quite often used in anger west of the Missis-

sippi. He felt that he would like to volunteer as chairman of a little committee that would dole out to said prosecutor a little of the strong medicine of the plains, usually applied to the neck.

Near him sat a number of society folk who had motored over again to make a Roman holiday of the affair and at the same time to refill their scandal larders. There were cynical smiles in the corners of their carmined lips and they nodded at each other with that very freemasonry of theirs. *They* knew what it all meant. One exquisitely-gowned lady of prominence, under whose filmy bodice surely beat a buzzard's heart, whispered to her neighbor: —

"It sounds pretty funny to me, all those meetings in those places with *that* man."

This was the Mrs. Van Sant Sturtevant whom Helen had once confronted at a luncheon and in her clear-eyed, frank way requested to change the subject which had just been introduced — it happened to be one of the first-mentioned lady's very characteristic stories, more pungent than any of the sauces before them.

The old veteran was worried about that prosecutor and that jury, although they looked like kindly, middle-aged men with families (Judge

Evans had seen to that), but he was not at all perturbed over Garry. He knew that in spite of the boy's suspicions of Helen's guilt "he would be there when the pinch came." Never yet had he failed.

Meanwhile the District Attorney was pounding away relentlessly.

"Did Miss Waldron say anything that would indicate that she knew what was the signal?"

"No."

"When the first explosion took place, did she look as if she expected it?"

"No."

"What did she say?"

"Nothing."

"Did she seem surprised?"

"Yes."

"What did she do?"

"I do not know, for a flash of the second after the explosion took place I started after Arnold."

"When you returned to the tower, what was she doing?"

It was with difficulty that Garry answered this.

"She was leaning motionless against the pillar and looking towards the west."

"Show the court the attitude."

"I'm no actor," snorted Garry.

The District Attorney's face flushed angrily, a titter ran through the crowded court-room and Jeff, leaning forward on his seat, slapped his knee with his hand so joyously and so hard that the loud, cracking report and the "Good boy!" he shouted could be heard all over the court-room, but the gavel fell.

Garry did not illustrate it, but he said, after the confusion subsided to a breathless silence once more: —

"She leaned back against the pillar — absolutely still," his voice slowly and with effort went on, and in his eyes Helen saw the dumb agony. "She had thrown her arm upward and the hand rested against her mouth with the palm outward."

"In the attitude of enjoyment, you mean?" said the voice with a persuasive insistence.

Helen shuddered, and Garry retorted angrily:

"I refuse to answer any such fool question. She stood there till the officer came, and never spoke."

Then the cross-examiner doubled back.

"You know there were three flashes agreed on as the signal?"

"I did n't know any such thing."

"You heard Ericsson testify to that?"

"Yes."

"How many times did you see that switch pulled."

There was an ominous quiet for a second.

"It was too dark to see clearly and I was rushing to stop it. I could n't count."

But the court forced Garry to answer this directly.

"Twice."

Then with that uncanny prescience that later made him famous in the courts of the land, the District Attorney wheeled and asked: —

"Did you *at any time* see Miss Waldron's hand upon that switch?"

For three heart-beats the silence was so profound that it seemed as vocal as the thunders of Niagara.

And in those three heart-beats, Helen saw what that question meant, — perjury for Garry if he persisted in his chivalry or a lifetime of remorse for him because of her conviction through his answer.

"Yes, I pulled the signal the first two times."

Garry's face contracted with the look of one almost mortally hurt — then it blazed with admiration for her courage.

The District Attorney looked triumphant, Judge Evans defeated, the spectators thrilled by one of those climaxes for which they longed, and the gavel frantically pounded again.

Then, like the trained jurist he was, Judge Evans instantly concealed his dismay, rose to his feet, and the fight was on.

It would take too long to tell of the bitterness of the legal battle that was waged that afternoon.

The defendant was at last called to the stand. In the crisis Helen's spirit characteristically rose, and somehow in her heart there was a feeling of vast relief because she had sacrificed herself for him.

Clearly she told the story of her relations with Mrs. Rintelen and von Arnheim and her father before the explosion, and all the details of the night of the first of September, the failure of Mrs. Rintelen to appear in the tower, the guile with which von Arnheim had inveigled her into pulling the switch. After all, it was nothing but a girlish lark.

Judge Evans, watching as he guided her, could not help but feel that the air of frankness with which she told her simple, logical story and her courage and beauty, which are factors always

to be reckoned with in courts, must impress the hearts of those twelve men in the jury-box. Covertly he watched them and was sure that much ground had been regained. Still the odds were very much against her.

It was late and the court adjourned.

When the trial was resumed at ten next morning Helen finished her story. Whatever effect it may have had upon the jury, all the prosecutor's cleverness and ingenuity in cross-examination could not shatter it. She asked no quarter; every twist and turn she followed patiently, almost cheerfully, now that she had made the sacrifice. Her spirit excited the admiration of the whole court-room and there was never the shadow of a contradiction in her replies. When she arose, many eyes sympathetically followed the graceful, black-clad figure to her seat by her counsel. The slight nod of his head and the pressure of his hand upon her arm told her that he still had hope. She cared not how frail it might be, she was resigned to whatever might be her fate.

Then her old friend began the summing-up, not in the heroic style of Delmas pleading at that other famous trial, but as an old man telling the simple story of an innocent girl he had

known and loved. It was perhaps the most telling sort of eloquence, for a grizzled reporter forgot his copy, the jurymen stared hard at the ceiling or out of the window, and even Mrs. Van Sant Sturtevant looked downcast and ashamed. Only at the end was there any attempt at oratory, and that seemed very natural.

"Would a girl guilty of the crime with which she is charged — and there is no greater in the world — rise, when she might have kept silent, to confess those circumstances, innocent in themselves, but suspicious until we heard her story? She did it simply to save a friend either from perjuring himself — a wrong a gallant man might mistakingly commit — or from speaking the words that he thought might send her innocent to her doom. That we now know is impossible, for we have heard the truth. But at the time it was a test of courage, the supreme test of loyalty. A character as loyal as that could never betray one's countrymen.

"You have heard that story, the kind a true-hearted woman tells, — the story of a woman guiltless and without fear.

"Gentlemen, there is no need for subterfuges, legal tricks or eloquence here. There is really no need to say anything further. Although a

lawyer, now that I am old I sometimes wish there were no courts — Your Honor will pardon an old man's seeming irreverence" — he interjected with a smile — "but I mean I sometimes wish we could go back to simple, primitive ways, for the ways of courts and of the Law, majestic as it is, are sometimes confusing. Then we could tell the simple facts and trust to the verdict of decent men, out in the open, in the city street, in the forest and the plain, away from the false issues sometimes raised within these walls. That is what I am trying to do to-day, to forget all I ever knew as a lawyer and leave with you this true-hearted girl's story, simple and untheatric, in the way she told it.

"I will confess, gentlemen of the jury, that I have known her since she was born" — here for the first time his voice trembled — "that I have held her in these arms when the only sound she could utter was that old first cry of the human race, the cry of hunger. She is as innocent to-day as then.

"We are in the midst of war and our cause in the last analysis stands and falls with its womanhood. And we are going to win that war because of the nobility of our own. And I say to you, gentlemen of the jury, that Helen Waldron,

who stands here accused of the foul crime of betraying her country, is not only innocent, but an example of all that is fine and loyal and noble in our American womanhood."

As he finished, Helen did not cry as so many in the court-room did—she was beyond tears, but her eyes shone with her deep gratitude.

It was a very unusual summing-up, almost unlegal, and quite naïve for so old and skilful a jurist. Never in his long career had the old Judge summed up so briefly or so seldom regarded the technical or purely legal aspects of a case. Not a soul in the room could doubt his sincerity and none accused him of capitalizing patriotism, except the Federal Attorney, who in summing up used all the invective, satire, and scorn of which he was master. Blow after blow fell on Helen. She faced them serenely and unafraid, but Jeff and Garry in the rear of the court-room, quite unused to lawyers' tactics, could scarcely keep from physically avenging the insults poured out on the helpless girl. The veins on Garry's forehead bulged, his fists clenched till the taut cords almost snapped, and the scar on his temple flushed a nasty red.

But the lashings ceased, and in a calm and

restrained voice, His Honor was instructing the jurymen in the law, and five minutes later the fateful door closed behind the twelve as the clock in the court-room told the hour of noon.

Most of the spectators left the court-room for luncheon, and Jeff, his heart torn for the boy, said to his old bunkie: —

"Come out and get a sandwich; yuh need a little something, boy."

"No, Jeff, I can't; I'll stay here till they come back."

"Well, come and have a smoke, anyway. It'll be some time before they come back. They've got to take some time, for the looks of the thing, anyway."

The two did n't say much as they strolled among the push-carts and newsboys of Park Row, crying the latest extras, which made Garry wince angrily. Once, as Jeff sifted the brown flakes into the deftly trenched little square of rice-paper, he said: —

"She's *game*, kid."

"Game as they make 'em," was the boy's answer.

Upstairs in one of the rooms adjoining the court her lawyer was saying to Helen: —

"I thought you had lost your case, my dear,

when you made that confession, but I think now that you were both wise and right."

"I had to tell the truth, my dear old friend, and I did n't want *him* to lie for me."

"You are a very brave woman, and your mother's own daughter."

The fair, youthful hand impulsively stretched across the table and closed on the old, blue-veined one, and the Judge realized then that she knew his secret and he was glad and smiled.

The battle that raged in that jury-room, from noon until almost sundown, can never be reported. Rumor afterwards had it that one opinionated and very argumentative juror was the only stumbling-block.

At a few minutes past five they filed in and faced the judge, all very solemn and very erect as became men in whose hands lay life and death.

"Gentlemen of the jury, look on the prisoner."

"Prisoner, look on the jury."

In the silence of the court-room Garry felt as if he could have heard a snowflake fall. The stillness was profound and seemed to last a generation — until it was broken by the nervous coughing of some emotional spectator.

Never, even when in the trenches he had

watched the glowing minute-hand swing around the dial towards the fatal dot of four, when they must go over the top and face the hell beyond, had he so felt the slow torture of suspense.

He heard the question of the judge, looked up and saw Helen, with her head thrown slightly back, not with the old hauteur that had embarrassed him when he had first seen her, but with the loftier courage of the spirit. And she smiled as she stood and awaited their answer.

That unemotional foreman's voice came at last. To Garry it sounded like the peal of triumphant bells ringing the news of a glorious victory: — "Not guilty."

The mists of his doubt of her had started to clear when she rose that time in court; her story on the stand had scattered them forever. And now she had been cleared in the eyes of the world!

He stormed the crowds to reach her side, just to press her hand and to say something of what was in his heart.

But Judge Evans had whisked her away through a side entrance and Garry was too late.

The first glad impulse over, he actually felt too ashamed to go to her home that night.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CROSS OF FIRE

In the morning a letter came.

Dear Garry: —

This is just a note of good-bye. You did not believe in me, but I do not blame you, for I was a blind, silly girl, though I was innocent of any wrong. And I can never forget how *you* were the first to show me the things that count. Some day, perhaps, we shall see each other again.

Until then, God bless you in your work and keep you.

Helen Waldron.

It did not take him long to reach her home. But it was in the hands of strangers.

Secretary Baker had known her mother when she had been Eleanor Crittenden, and through him Judge Evans had secured passports to be given her in case of her acquittal, and she was already out on the high seas with the freshening wind on her cheek.

A volume lay in her lap, an old favorite of hers, Scott's "Lady of the Lake." Idly she turned the pages until she came to the second canto.

Breathlessly she read of the cross of yew boughs, dipped in blood and then set on fire and carried by the swiftest runner as a flaming signal of war to the neighboring clan, and thence relayed by willing feet to the next clansmen, and so on through the Highlands, till all the warriors were summoned.

"Multiply that ten thousand times and you have the world to-day," she thought. "They are carrying 'The Cross of Fire' from land to land till every nation that loves Liberty answers the summons.

"And I am going over to help."

While Helen was pondering all these things, Garry slowly descended the steps of the home she had left behind.

As he turned up the street he heard a crash of music. The leading band of the passing parade was playing the National Anthem as they marched down Fifth Avenue. A regiment of soldiers fresh from the training-camp preceded a horde of draft men. It was a wonderful contrast — the straggling lines of ill-assorted and often white-faced men from the stores and offices and push-carts, with bodies curved like question-marks, and irrepressible cries of school-

boy enthusiasm that verged on flippancy — and the martial precision, erectness of figure, the bronze and red of health, and the silence, that meant not lack of enthusiasm but discipline, of the men who had preceded the newcomers to the draft-camps by but a short three months.

He wheeled into Forty-second Street, and at Sixth Avenue crossed over to the west side. A poster and a man in khaki proclaimed a recruiting office. Down the stairs, three at a time, like boys just out of school, although they were past thirty, rushed three men, and Garry stared open-mouthed. The three volunteers were his friends of his old office days in the Colonial Trust Company Building — once typical exponents of Neutrality — Henry Wagner, the boy of German descent, Jimmy Gargan, the fiery, red-headed Irishman, and — yes — Joey Bernstein, the little Hebrew lawyer.

"Hello, fellows, so you've gone and done it," he said, looking up at the recruiting poster.

The three grinned sheepishly, recollecting the names they had called him back in the little eight-by-ten office in Newark, when he had himself gone over to fight.

"Yes, Garry, the drinks are on us," remarked Jimmy Gargan, which interpreted meant that

they apologized profoundly and profusely. Garry accepted the apology, though not the invitation, for he did not feel very much like celebrating just then. Shaking hands with each and wishing them the best of luck, he turned over towards the Avenue.

The three recruits were three live, concrete examples of how public sentiment had crystallized, he thought. Already the transformation had begun to show in their faces, from the very moment they had enlisted. Perhaps the decision had come from mixed motives, but at least the bright-colored thread of patriotism glorified the rest.

Over on the great avenue, the tremendous transformation the Nation had undergone was even more manifest. It was like a carnival rampant, the patriotic drive that was on. Beneath banners and gay posters everywhere displayed, tens of thousands of girls in white, with the beautiful insignia of the Red Cross, besieged the passers-by for contributions, mounted busses, or leaped the run-boards of automobiles to collect from willing passengers.

And some lifted nets, and groups of fours carried flags which they persuaded the passing throng to cover with greenbacks and silver. And

others sold flowers, and still others extorted coins from laughing men by that most modern device, the vacuum-cleaner. Noble bandits under the glorious insignia of the Red Cross!

It was a pageant, a carnival; they held high holiday, with little thought, perhaps, of the seriousness and the grimness of war, but it was inspiring to Garry, the unanimity with which the great crowd worked, the fine generosity of a great city's people.

Yes, it was at that very corner, at the Library he had cried in chagrin: "And will they ever wake up?"

"They are waking up fast now," he said.

One fleeting thought of sadness at the other memory that corner recalled — his first meeting with Helen — he banished in the larger call of Duty.

"I've done my work on this side and I'm fit once more. I'm going over to fight."

So that is why he and Jeff, who had patriotically lied about his age, were on the deck of the troop-steamer which sailed out of the harbor a few weeks later, and Garry was asking Jeff as they passed under the famous Torch of Liberty: —

"Do you think there's a chance of our run-

ning across that Boche Arnold again? If we do —"

And Jeff interrupted: —

"I've got a hunch you will."

And though he did n't utter it aloud, Garry was wishing — for he trusted these "hunches" of his friend as the Israelites of old relied on the visions of the major prophets — that Jeff had another, namely, that he would meet *some one else*, that is, *after* he had met and talked a little with Mr. Frederick Arnold, or the Count von Arnheim, if the gentleman preferred that title.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SONG OF THE DOUGHBOYS

THE sound of singing, of rough soldier singing, —

" The guns are roaring up the line,
They 're at it all day long,
The shells, they whistle and screech and whine, —
It ain't no pretty song."

Not the voices of professional soldiers, but of jolly, eager boys from forge and desk and plough — of boys on a lark, the greatest lark on which youth has gone a-questing since the world began.

The sounds floated melodiously out on the night with its incongruous mixture of peaceful star-shine and angry cannon flare, from the great barn across the field to the little stone farm-house, centuries old, where he sat at the window. It had a merry, jovial chorus — this song, Garry thought. This is the way it ran: —

THE SONG OF THE DOUGHBOYS

1

The guns are roaring up the line,
They 're at it all day long,
The shells, they whistle and screech and whine, —
It ain't no pretty song.

Chorus:

But we've got to keep at it, we 've *got* to stick at it —
We 're going to carry on.

2

And there is blinkin' rats and mud,
Besides the blasted shells,
And cooties, sudden death and blood,
And other kinds of Hells.

Chorus.

3

The guns is roaring up the line,
The shells come right along;
If they have your number, or if they have mine,
One of us is in wrong.

Chorus.

4

And if that gentle, perlite shell
Is properly addressed,
It 's Jack or Ed or poor old Bill
Or me, that 's going west.

Chorus.

5

Oh, Berlin road is long and rough,
But we will never fail,
For though the going may be tough,
We sure have hit that trail.

Chorus.

Cheerily the chorus floated across the fields to their rackety accompaniment tattooed by pipes and accoutrements against their boot-heels or the walls of the barn.

"But we 've got to keep at it, we 've *got* to stick at it;
We 're going to carry on."

Garry (the silver bar on each khaki shoulder proclaimed him Lieutenant James Garrison Owen now) neglected for a while his job of censoring the variously assorted company mail before him and felt a little lonely in that farm-house. It was n't quite so fine, this commission of his, as he had imagined, for officers must not hobnob too freely with the enlisted men — that is iron-bound service tradition — and he had been in the ranks himself so long — and then there was Jeff.

The voices now struck up another version of the song, one very recently composed and rapidly banged out on a sturdy canteen piano, in a more humorous mood, by the composer, an ex-headliner on the Orpheum circuit, a "riot" everywhere, and disciple of Irving Berlin, but in the army now and very proud of his khaki.

He had christened the version, which they were roaring out now with such relish, —

SLACKERS SIX

1

The Kaiser has six husky sons,
With nice tin swords and such;
They ride far from the smoking guns,
They suffer very much.

Chorus:

But we 've got to keep at it, we 've *got* to stick at it,
We 're going to carry on.

2

Oh, one of them his leg did break —
A dreadful casualty;
The others suffer tummy-ache
To set their Deutschland free.

Chorus.

3

Their Kaiser has a hundred suits,
He wears new pants each day.
He gives his cast-off clothes and boots
To Gott, his protajay.

Chorus.

4

" Herr Pa," sez they, " we surely think
Where Gott sits you should sit."
" Why worry?" sez this kinkiest Kink,
" The *world knows I am It.*"

Chorus.

5

" Besides, the peepul 's had their full
Of cannon foddering,
The shining sword 's the stuff to pull,
' Gott Mit Uns ' is the thing."

Chorus.

6

And then he gives a little wink
To his six saphead sons,
" Dear peepul, for your Kaiser Kink
Und Gott, go feed the guns."

Chorus.

7

In another suit we 'll doll him up,
With stripes all black and white,
And a lil' ole collar made of rope —
Then Kaiser Bill, Good night!

Chorus.

The regiment, which Jeff and Garry had joined because it belonged to the infantry arm of the service and offered, at least in this war, greater chances of active service than the cavalry, was the very apple of the Colonel's eye. Although its core and seeds were old regulars, the pulp was chiefly composed of young volunteers and draft men, recently consolidated with them, who had been given a few months trench-kindergartening

in the States, polished off at the training-base, and were now "on their own," comparatively speaking, in rest-billets, in this village a few miles behind the front lines.

A few dozen of Garry's company were quartered in the building from which the singing came, and quite as clearly as he could hear those cheery voices, he could picture the group as he had seen it a few moments before when he had stopped on his way to Quarters for a chat with Jeff.

It *had been* a barn, but its shot-punctured roof, when one looked up, was now like a colander, with stars centring some of the holes.

The time before "Tattoo" was being very rapidly routed by the doughboys, all of them fit and tanned and most of them convict-shaved against the coming summer, as they lounged on the straw smoking, playing cards or mouth-organs, or chatting of Broadway, Randolph Street, or the Rio Grande, according to the natural habitat of the one who happened to have the floor.

Jeff was at his old tricks, teaching a little bright-eyed gamin the proper salute and the manual of arms, the rifle being a crutch, for this little French kiddie, one of those innu-

merable orphaned, homeless children who follow sadly in the wake of the Allied armies, was lame, some said from shrapnel, but he insisted from a German officer's sword, when the enemy swept through the village that once had been his home. When he had first drifted into their camp he had heard the men call Jeff by name, so like his own beloved General's, and he forthwith adopted the tall, grizzled trooper as his patron and always called him "Ze Américain Joff."

Jeff, by the way, was always "broke" — it was two bits here and two bits there for the little lame kiddie and the other hollow-eyed waifs — and a fighting sergeant's pay is only about sixteen per cent of a shipbuilder's in Newark; if he had had a Lieutenant-General's three stars on his shoulders, his income would have been squandered the same way.

"I can't stand the eyes of them kids," he used to say to Garry. "If we can only make them forget!"

But that pile of letters suddenly loomed accusing and mountain high before Garry's conscience. He looked at his radium-watch and began the censoring of the batch of rough-pencilled missives.

"I hate this job sometimes," so on his fancies ran. "It's 'most like being a snooping keyhole detective or else a surgeon operating on naked hearts. Tommy Hughes is a pretty homesick kid — a blind man can see that" (he folded the single, tensely written sheet and put it back) — "and Eddie Bierbauer, from Xenia, Ohio, says, 'When this war is over, Mother,' three separate times — anybody'd get that. . . . Sam Hosford, from Sandusky, same State, asks in every letter, 'When you see Ruby Baker, tell her' this or that — wonder why he don't write to her oftener himself. She's the girl that slips the plugs in the phoneboard at the Old Sloane House on Main Street — I can just see her — marcelled in front considerable, wads of brown hair over each ear, a dab of paint on each cheek — which she does n't need, but it's fashionable, you know — and her pretty gift o' gab. Click, click, go the plugs; snap, snap, her little old vanity bag; out pops the mirror — she's holding it before her now and powdering that pretty fresh little nose of hers — but she's a nice girl all right — here's hoping, Sammy, ole boy, Ruby'll stick — I'll bet she does. . . . Thank Heaven, most of the boys find a man's enjoyment in playing the game."

Then a letter with the name Nell in it, poor little Betty's nickname for her sister, and he fell to thinking of Helen. Although he had gained not the slightest clue about her since that morning after the trial, when he had called at her home to find it in the hands of strangers, Garry felt that he would meet her some day.

But, forget it — he must not be brooding with a man's job ahead — he needed a little more of the Light Brigade stuff — and in melodious confirmation of his resolve again there came floating across the field the last verse of that song: —

"Oh, Berlin road is long and rough,
But we will never fail,
For though the going may be tough,
We sure have hit that trail."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TIN LIZZIE SHOWS ITS METTLE

On the following morning the brigade of which Garry's regiment formed a part was ordered to take over a sector of the front line, between two French divisions. As they moved up, the signs of war were evident on every hand, — a desolate wall or a thatched roof askew, all that was left of some once lovely village; the shell of a wayside church, forlornly beautiful in the moonlight; the humming of a ghostly aeroplane; and ever beyond them, the thunder and the red glare of the big guns.

Jeff, however, was in no mood for sentimentalizing and remarked that "after all this furrin' stage scenery, them damn Missouri mules on the supply wagons look like home." But soon they were within a hundred yards of the trenches.

And although Garry truthfully confessed to fear very often, he was actually glad to pass the outgoing poilus in their stained uniforms of horizon blue, weary but smiling, and a little later to duck down the zigzagging communication trenches that led to the front line, for he

was in it once more. And this in spite of the wicked chatter of the machine guns and the spatter of shards of bursting shrapnel that exploded near them, showering them with dirt and necessitating a steadying word from veteran Garry to the rookies.

If the range of the periscope, through which Garry surveyed the black wilderness of No Man's Land, could only have been increased by Professor Serviss, or Lowell, or any of the great astronomers, and swung southeast, he would have seen Helen not so far away — about eight kilos, to be exact, and about four miles behind the French division that neighbored Garry's brigade to the right.

She was in a rut — not figuratively, but *literally*. The sun was shining brightly but the heavy rain of the night before had messed things badly and the right side of the little ambulance was firmly engulfed in a nice brown slough. It was the same sort of little car she had known back home, which the delicatessen drove on Sundays, just like a rabbit hutch, bursting with its litter of children. But it was a glorified Tin Lizzie now with its grey coat, and on its side the Red Cross, and its baptism of blood.

The road wound up the hill and she was on the up-curve. Through the trees to the right she could see the valley, with the silver smile of a river afar off, and, only four miles away, the brown cracks in the earth's surface, all as irregular as furrows ploughed by a city-man who has turned to the simple life, or a Boston street. Each crack, she knew, was peopled by dirty, steel-helmeted men, lying in wait to spring at each other's throats. Occasional giant expanding cotton-balls of smoke showed that the big guns were not sleeping.

Just over the hill's shoulder, a half-mile of road, turning sharply to the left and running parallel with the trenches, past groves of noble trees, half-still in their beauty, half-twisted and stark from the shells, zigzagged into the little French town and the field hospital located there. As soon as she got over the hilltop she would see it.

But how to get out of the rut!

The engineers had built a little détour, forking off just where she was stalled, but the new road was barricaded by a great shell-felled tree, so she must take the old road over the hill, in full view of the valley and the enemy guns. The preceding ambulance had escaped destruction

by a foot, and the fragment of another shell, just bursting near them, added to the complications by puncturing a tire.

It would be stretching the truth to say that Helen did n't jump. She did, but just the same she stuck. Jeff said she was game. She was. After one feminine shudder and a "Good gracious, but that was close!" whose incongruous commonplaceness in such a critical moment showed her courage, she smiled and kept to the driver's seat, trying to start the engine, while the bright-faced M.C., on his way to the hospital, worked away at the wheels. He had known poor Jimmy McLean at Princeton. It was the first connecting home-link she had found, since coming across.

"That juice simply won't start. *You* say it for me. I won't hear you saying it with those horrid shells, yet I'll know you're saying it and you'll relieve me," she laughed at him.

"And, dear me, a tire gone — oh, for the comforts of home — at least a decent garage and then some nice smooth asphalt." That's what her companion heard her say, but all this persiflage simply meant that she was saying to herself (it was her first time under fire), "Now, don't go and get a case of feminine nerves,

Helen Waldron. You've got to be a man now and do a man's job."

To her spoken remarks the boy only grinned a cheery answer and worked on with his shoulder.

They just negotiated it. He leaped to the seat, and they shot away, flat tire and all, over the hundred feet of exposed road. But they had had their thrills for that ride, and they rattled safely down the last half-mile to the field hospital that stood on the edge of the little town. Then after a quick tire-change, the bleeding forms of three poilus were gently carried, Helen helping them tenderly but not ineffectually as some women would have done. They were placed, two in the bottom stretchers, and one above, and after sundown the long ride to the hospital train began.

Hard for a girl of Helen's training, yes, but all in the day's work. She was happy to be of some use and had never regretted her choice. Back in London, after leaving the steamer, she, in her humility, had wanted to take the humblest of tasks, even the scrubbing of floors, but she had finally decided that this dangerous work with the little Tin Lizzie was for her. She was cool and strong and could drive, and it *was* dangerous. That would be her service. But she

looked well in the regulation ambulance khaki. Perhaps a few pounds had been lost, but that beautiful steel and velvet body of hers was never more fit, and the old look of inquiry about that profile, which was such a beautiful combination of exquisiteness and strength of character, seemed to have been in part answered. Peace she had found. Still, even in the press of her duties there were scattered moments when she could and did think and wonder about a ruddy-faced boy with the bright scar on his temple.

But her eye must be sharp and her hand firm as in the night she followed the red trail. It was hard, for she loved these patient French soldiers, who complained so little, only when some sudden jolting racked a shattered body. At last under the morphia influence two fell asleep. And she began to sing softly — she knew not what prompted her — a gentle lullaby. When she paused the one who could not sleep and who would never walk again, begged her: —

"If the Mademoiselle will, it would so help if she would sing a little longer. She sings — beautifully — as my mother used to sing. It helps — the pain."

Courteous and gallant even in the face of death, these brave gentlemen of France — she

loved them. And as soon as she could still that choking in her throat, she began again. So over the rough roads she sang that lullaby to the wounded soldier, while above the plain afar off shone the assurance of the stars that somewhere beyond these smoking valleys there waited the ultimate Peace.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GENTLE SISTER OF VEILLEUX

In the blessed years of Peace, which will surely come in God's good time, the people of the town — that is, all that is left of them — their children, and their children's children will often tell the story of the Gentle Sister of Veilleux.

As she had a very great influence over Helen Waldron's life, and Garry's, the story of how she came to Veilleux, the little town where lay the field hospital which marked the incoming journey's end of the little ambulance, must first be told for a proper understanding. The name you will not find on the map, but it is not unlike the rightful name and not displeasing to His Majesty the Censor, so it will undoubtedly serve the purpose.

Two miles behind the front-line Allied trench it lies, its extreme western end due south of the liaison or junction point of the American and French brigades.

The morning of the thirty-first of May was overcast, and when the mist lifted a little, an American sentry, standing peering out into No

Man's Land, with his rifle over the parapet, descried a form moving a few feet in front of his own wire. He was a Texan, almost as tall as Jeff and the forefinger of his huge ham of a hand was just crooking on the trigger when some impulse stayed him. He swore, gently, for even legitimate cusses must not be too loud in the trenches at these times: —

"By Gawd, if it ain't a woman!"

He called to the runner at his feet: —

"Hey, buddie, what do yuh make of that?"

The runner, rubbing his sleepy eyes, mounted the fire-step. He also cursed gently: —

"A skirt, so help me!"

The word passed on to the men in the next fire-bay. Some with rough chivalry were for going over at once; others stayed them, declaring: —

"It's a damned Boche trick."

They listened, — a faint moan, undeniably a woman's, came to their ears.

"Come on, Jack, let's take a chance; we can't let her lie there."

So the two rough Westerners, all unconscious of their heroism, crawled over the parapet and through a lane cut in the wire. The mist lifted a little, but Fritz, unusually generous, never

fired a shot, and between them they carried the black-draped bundle to the trenches.

They applied rough first aid, and the woman, clad in the garments and hood of a nun, opened her eyes, murmuring something in French.

"We're not much on the parleyvoo, boys; let's slip her over to the Frenchies."

Down the trench on a stretcher they carried her and left her with their French comrades.

The gentle-eyed poilus swore eternal vengeance when they heard her story, that story, old these last four years, of capture in a convent, a life in the trenches that is worse than death — a story which one cannot easily repeat.

Still on a stretcher they carried her back through the communication trenches for a mile or so, then on toward Veilleux.

On its northern edge stood an ancient convent, or rather that half of it which was still undestroyed save for a great shell-hole, through which a man could crawl straight to the altar in the chapel.

She begged to be left here. The stretcher-bearers would have carried her on to the hospital, but she pleaded, then insisted, and finally abjured them by the crucifix which she held high before them to let her rest there.

So they bore her reverently through the outer wall, and the garden where tangled roses still bloomed, and up the narrow stairs to a bare little room, furnished with a pallet, a rough mattress, and a large crucifix near the high barred window that looked toward the trenches.

Two days later the townsfolk of Veilleux — that is, those who still remained here, with eyes that looked as if they never could know joy again, even if they lived for centuries — clambered from their cellars, when the big guns were still for a while, and saw the stranger nun sally forth from the half-ruined convent.

So her work of mercy began. She was never idle; she tended the wounded when the hospital overflowed, she sang to the little ghost-waifs of children, and the simple folk, haunting the town like dream inhabitants, almost smiled when they saw her coming. All grew to love her and confide in her their sorrows — joys they had none to tell. So blessings followed the tall, black-draped figure of the Gentle Sister of Veilleux, as they came to call her, wherever she went.

Helen, climbing down from the seat of her ambulance one evening, noticed the strange figure, rather dimly outlined in the darkness, walking away from the hospital and asked

Johnny Gardner, the cheery medico, about her. Helen had grown quite chummy with the boy in a very short space of time, as folks under fire will do. She laughed at his funny little mustache, but she loved, as all women did, his blue eyes and his sunny spirit.

"Oh, that's the Sister who escaped from the Germans" — and as delicately as he could, he told Helen the story. "Every one in the village loves her, and Jacques and François over there," pointing toward the trenches from which a few star-shells were ascending, "swear by her now as their patron saint."

And the Gentle Sister of Veilleux went on her ministering way, toiling ceaselessly by day, at night sleeping alone in her bare little cell, brightened now with a few roses which she had plucked from the lovely wilderness of the garden. Surely this was no sin, or, if it was, one from which she could very easily be absolved.

The first of June came and one night she left her little cell and, descending the stairs, entered the door that led to the altar in the chapel. One great candle she lighted and placed upon the altar and then sat down to sew — surely again no sin, even in this holy place, for she was making a tiny garment for poor Madame

Rollet who expected to welcome a little visitor about the following week, for births would go on even in this city of death. With a sad appropriateness the cloth was of black, for all the linen in the village had long since gone to bind up the wounds of the men who needed it most.

Two miles away lay the Allied fire trenches and, two hundred yards beyond that, the front line of the Germans, on a slope of a little hill. In an observation post a German officer leaned against a shattered tree-trunk and calmly surveyed through his binoculars the town and the ancient convent, through the shell-hole of which he could see the tiny light.

Meantime the Gentle Sister sewed on steadily. But once in a while she would hold the black garment up for a space, measuring it, perhaps, with practised eye. Then she would drop it, and perhaps raise it again to satisfy herself. Sometimes she would do this once, sometimes twice or thrice. It interested the German officer — the winkings of this little light which the performance made. It was very odd — the obscuring of the light sometimes lasted for three seconds, again only for a second. Then the Sister would sew steadily for five minutes or more, humming to herself an *Ave Maria*, and

then she would raise the little garment again, dropping it as before, once or twice or maybe thrice.

Occasionally the task wearied her; she would rise and pace back and forth between the light and the shell-made window, maybe once, as it suited her whim, or two and three times, if her nerves were especially taxed.

So several times that night the light winked in the rough window. The watching German officer was not the only one who noticed it, for a French lieutenant in the trenches below turned to a sergeant and dispatched him back to the town to see what the light signified.

Stealthily he entered the garden wall and found the chapel quite dark, and then — for he must be very vigilant — he searched every nook and cranny and at last mounted the cold stone stairway to the upper chamber. In the moonlight which fell slanting through the narrow, barred window on the rough pallet, he saw the wearied figure of the poor Sister, sleeping the sleep of the innocent, the tiny garment still clutched in her hand.

Crossing himself he reverently withdrew.

CHAPTER XXV

PAGE DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

SOME one had miscued — there was no mistake about it. It had n't run true to form, it had flivvered badly — this particular raid — that was why Garry Owen was being kicked down a German communication trench — a prisoner!

A few hours before (it was exactly two nights after the light had winked so picturesquely in the convent chapel) — just about dark, or "Stand to," an officer had suddenly whisked out of the gloom of their own communication trench, paused in the fire-bay where Lieutenant Owen was standing, and passed on to him the wish of Headquarters, namely, that volunteers should capture a few Boche prisoners, who, willing or unwilling, would throw some light on the sudden activities, behind the enemy lines just opposite, which some airmen had vaguely reported, the cloudy weather preventing any very accurate observation.

Cables are daily sparking over thrilling dispatches of raids where the Yanks capture fifty, one hundred, two hundred prisoners, but Garry felt that you ought to tell that to the Marines

— though you can't tell them anything any more after their glorious work this year, God bless 'em! — but at any rate they must have been yellow Saxons, not Prussians, who still had plenty of kick left, as his body testified eloquently, for each little bone was a W. J. B. or a Chauncey Depew, or a Billy Sunday all by itself. Anyway, the little raid of which he had been in charge (Jeff, much to his own disgust, had been refused) had been nothing like that. Nor was it anything like the soldier story-books. The first half-hour had been, just as if carefully rehearsed — all the setting and the bits of business — devilish bits of business, such as crawling forward on bellies through mud, shell-holes, snarls of wire, ageing remains of artillery horses and what had once been men, and then the betraying white trails of the star-shells. Then, a few yards from the German wire, the miscue — cough, sneeze, groan, it did n't matter now — he could think of several details that might have turned the trick. It was his fault, as he was in command — they had been too eager. Anyway, there was no sudden spitting of machine-gun fire, simply a piking little nest of trap-wires — some had stumbled and out of the darkness and from a blind sap had catapulted twice their

number of Prussians. (Those eighty-three prisoners which that one sergeant from Oshkosh, so the papers said, captured, must have been fed up with the whole damn business and mighty anxious to surrender — anyway, they were n't Prussians.) It had been a pretty stiff fight, and oh, Garry wished he had been Douglas Fairbanks, every heave of whose chest bowls over whole regiments of extras. But it is so easy on the celluloid. Those Prussians, it seems, had also wanted prisoners — very inconsiderate of them — they had "crabbed their act," and now it was a case of captors captured. Half of the boys had been put out of the way by knuckle-knives, after exacting a heavy toll, but the other five, including poor Garry, their crestfallen commander, were hustled ignominiously down that blind sap into the front line and now toward the rear.

He was being ushered, not as gently as the white-gloved, swallow-tailed gentlemen perform that function at a fashionable church wedding, but very forcefully, by Prussian boots and bayonet-butts.

And they called him several things with their Big Bertha adjectives, just the opposite of what they would have called the "All-Highest," some-

thing like "low-down dog" — "Schweinhund" to be exact.

In spite of his aches and bruises Garry thought to himself: "I think I get you — if you mean bonehead and boob, you've said it — go on, kick me, I deserve it."

But he changed his mind and out shot his fist when a brute, with Jess Willard's height and reach, *spat* at him.

But that did not help at all, and the gentle Prussian ushering continued until they reached the first-aid dressing-station, located in an elephant dug-out, some three hundred yards back, into which he was thrust, disgusted, and bruised and sore, his whole body throbbing painfully, far more than one would think from his reflections just noted. But he was remorseful and blamed the failure on himself, and then he was gamely whistling to keep up his courage.

That slice in the neck from the wicked knuckle-knife smarted infernally; his collar, shoulder, and shirt were damp with blood. The surgeon was quite as rough as the guardsmen until admonished by a bystanding officer — not from any real sympathy, but with precisely the same quality of mercy, unstrained, with which a cannibal king might order the best of care for a

fat missionary captive. Orders had come from Somewhere-Higher-Up to present a real live American officer at a particular point back of the lines. And poor Garry (another reason for feeling he merited those well-placed kicks) in his hurry had neglected to remove those silver bars from his shoulders. Out in No Man's Land, he had remembered this precaution and had muddied them hastily to prevent their betraying shine, but for all that they now very clearly revealed his rank to the suave, keen-eyed officer in grey, who, while he questioned him, twirled his mustaches grandiloquently as the Count von Arnheim would have done — when he was not Frederick Arnold. In fact, the man reminded Garry of that ancient enemy, which added not a little to his rage.

Questions this stubborn lieutenant refused to answer, feigning faintness from loss of blood, which did not help him very much, for with the others he was immediately put in charge of a dozen long-lance-bearing Uhlans, who looked as if they might have been cut out of an illustrated history of the Franco-Prussian War, and escorted a few kilos or so farther back of the lines. Even in his utter fatigue and faintness Garry noticed the long lines of incoming soldiers — apparently

fresh reserves and shock troops — and long processions of rattling motor-lorries and creaking supply-wagons. To all of which one Uhlan, in a mixture of low Deutsch and English, called Garry's attention byprodding him with his lance.

"Siehst du, Amerikaner pig-dog, ein leedle — vot you call it? — prozzession nach Paris."

"You've got another guess coming," muttered the boy — but under his breath, for his sore flanks and back reminded him that discretion was necessary.

At last they reached a little hill, on the crown of which, by the light of the moon, occasionally shining from the rifts in the fast-scurrying clouds, they could see the picturesque outlines of a splendid château, comparatively unscathed by gun-fire, which was uncommon in this disputed sector.

The other weary prisoners were hurried on to a temporary prison-pen a half-mile beyond. But two of the Uhlans detached themselves from the rest and ordered the stubborn American lieutenant up the château driveway. In a stone outbuilding in the rear of the place they thrust him for the night, with a stray moonbeam for a candle, a forkful of straw for a mattress, and the rats for merry bedfellows.

CHAPTER XXVI

HELEN MEETS THE GENTLE SISTER OF VEILLEUX

A FEW hours after Garry's capture, and before the grey of dawn, the bombardment began. On the northern horizon the guns flashed like heat-lightning, their sudden fire tinged with pulsating red as though with blood. Screaming through the night the shells came, curving with beautiful, mathematical precision, as coolly murderous as the infamous system that sent them hurling through the world, upon the trenches held by the French and Americans.

But it was no problem of cold mathematics to that thin line of defenders — their feelings were better told in terms of fierce primitive emotion, — exultant, Berseker rage or the creeping paralysis of fear. A skilled artilleryman could draw an accurate diagram of the arcs and curves of those screaming shells, but none of the whirling chaos of wire and trench and human flesh that followed their fall. And all amidst a din as terrible as the collision of two planets, crashing head-on in the stellar spaces before the heavenly harmony began.

Yes, many more things those screaming missiles meant to those men far up in the front ine than they did to the distinguished German General Staff who devised the battle plan in the calm security of their own headquarters, — strangling in clouds of poison gas and searing liquid fire; bracing to meet the shock of steel-toothed lines of never-ending, grey-clad troops; seeing one's loved comrade at one's side and then — not seeing him, a heart-beat later — or ever afterwards.

Why did not the spirits of those men in the trenches below — plain, unlettered men like Old Jeff Blake — falter and fail?

The body of a bird is a frail and delicate thing, yet on poised wings, guided by some unerring instinct, it rides the storm; and so the soul of man, on the wings of some faith divine, although he may know it not, for four long years has ridden the Tempest of Death and has not fallen or been dashed to pieces.

Helen in her ambulance reached the crest of the hill as the sun was swallowed up in the fire and smoke to the northwest. Another little grey car, driven by a New York University boy she knew, with a load of six wounded where ordi-

narily only three were carried, met her on the summit. He slowed up for a second and shouted to her: —

"Germans entering Veilleux — take it in half an hour. You're a woman, better go back."

"Any wounded left?"

"A few, all hopeless — I tell you you'd better turn," he yelled as he threw in the clutch.

"Only a woman," she thought, "but there are wounded there —"

She was very pale and very tense, but the wheel swerved not an inch as down into the valley's smoke she sped.

All day ragged bits of news had come to the few survivors in the village — "Fire trench taken" — "support trench lost" — "three hundred yards gained by the enemy" — "a mile" — "Oh! merciful God, they've reached the bridge."

All day Jeff had fought, he the oldest man in the company, the oldest man in the regiment, with calm and grim determination, steadying the men to right and left, and once or twice even cheering them with some grim joke.

But at the end of the long day the thin line of defenders, far outnumbered in this drive, had crumpled up, engulfed by the grey masses as

children playing on the sands by a tidal wave.

Helen did not stop to watch, but even as she dashed up to the field hospital, Jeff's brigade was three miles back of the old line and the French were making their last stand in the village.

Like antediluvian monsters the "flammenwürfer wagen" were crawling over the ruins, and a mile away, troops of Uhlans, seldom used in an offensive, were trotting over the still-smouldering débris.

The roof of the eastern half of the hospital had fallen, trench-mortar bombs were bursting near them, and even as she entered, a fusillade of machine-gun bullets rattled on the walls.

For a moment her courage failed and she would have fled, but something within her turned her head.

Five forms twisted on the cots.

"I cannot leave those poor boys," she said.

One brave M.C. man, whom she knew slightly, still stuck at his post. By all physical rules her energy should have been spent before this, but the spirit triumphed. As carefully as they could in their haste, they lifted the first form on a stretcher and bore him toward the grey car.

But just as the boy reached the ground and Helen stood on the threshold, supporting her end, a tremendous report and a great concussion stretched her flat. When she came to — it must have been fifteen minutes later — the brave M.C. had gone to his reward, and the noble little grey ambulance was nothing but a mass of junk, returned to its elements again. But it and the other little Tin Lizzies had surely shown their mettle that day.

The attacking troops had swept through the village, and a little later, a group of Uhlan horsemen, gleaning prisoners in the wake of the battle, clattered over the stone and brick-strewn roadway. Seeing her loveliness, the eyes of the Uhlan captain glistened — a rare prize, he thought, and he lifted her to his horse, then mounted himself. They swerved and started toward the old German lines.

Leaving what remained of the village, they advanced at a careful trot, the horses picking their way over heaps of masonry, tumbled walls, fallen trees, and gaping shell-holes, until they reached the north end of the town.

Helen was unwounded, though pretty well bruised and stunned, but even in her half-fainting condition, she noticed that the convent

still stood unscathed, all but the cloister to the west, and that had been destroyed long before the battle that had raged that day.

Her religious life up till the year before had been made up of formal, routine observances of Lent, occasional visits to fashionable St. Thomas's, or perhaps an hour per week dabblingly devoted to the Young Women's Guild. But though he would have called you a lunatic if you had actually suggested the truth to him, Garry had built far better than he knew. From the very moment he fired that chance shot at the beautiful girl riding by the Library corner, a change began. With her increasing interest in the Red Cross and all her works of mercy, was born a real faith in that Greater Religion, of which after all the Red Cross is but the symbol. Tried in the forge of war with its flames of suffering, this faith had become like tempered steel, a strong, vital, and yet a comforting thing.

Still, though she sympathized with, she had not always believed implicitly in the homely legends, beautiful as they were, of saints and shrines protected from the ravages of war, for though peace awaits them in another world, the helpless, the innocent, and the holy still suffer in France to-day.

But the old folk-tales seemed more than mere legends when she saw the unharmed convent and the rose-garden blooming peacefully in the ruin around it — all apparently sanctified by the good deeds of the Gentle Sister of Veilleux of whom she had heard so often.

At the door in the garden-wall they paused. The Uhlan captain dismounted, clanked up the walk, and entered the convent. In a moment he emerged with the presiding saint of the place, the Gentle Sister herself, in her usual black trailing robes, but with a Vanity Fair manner most puzzling, smacking of Monte Carlo, Ostend, or the Atlantic City Boardwalk, rather than the sequestered cloister. Her air, as she actually flirted with the fierce-mustached officer down the flower-bordered walk, was partly coquettish and wholly triumphant. It puzzled Helen, and she tried to scan the features of this strange nun, but could not for the darkness. One riderless, bridle-led horse had trotted along with the troop and this the Gentle Sister mounted with the attentive aid of her uncavalier-like-looking escort. Then they proceeded, the guest from the convent riding with the commander — Helen now on foot with a forlorn group of non-combatants, chiefly women selected for their looks

and health, and urged forward by the lance-pricks and curses of the troopers.

On they rode through the night, lit by the flashes of the never-wearied artillery and ever rumbling with their thunder — past field batteries galloping toward the front, columns of ingoing troops lustily singing, "Heil Dir im König Kranz," and sweating gun-crews and tractors snaking the big heavies forward for the new advance.

Every bone in the body of the girl burned as if afire and her whole figure sagged, but the Uhlans mercilessly hustled her over the road toward the rear.

Two hours and twelve kilos passed. Have you never fallen asleep walking or standing up? Then you don't know what real weariness is. That night Helen did, and she was almost drifting off into some sort of walking doze, pain-racked and ever echoing with far-off rumblings, when a voice at her side, an insistent voice, pierced the shadows of her unconsciousness like a probing searchlight made vocal.

If one strikes a note on the piano, releases the key, and then immediately sings that same note, the piano string gives its elfin echo; so when that voice ceased for a moment, she heard it still

vibrating in her memory. Where had she heard it before?

Again, above the pad of the horses' hoofs and the creak of saddle and stirrup leather, sounded the notes of that voice, rich and contralto and full of little grace notes of mocking laughter.

Dreamily trying to collect her straying senses, she realized that the voice came from the shadowy form on horseback in the darkness by her side.

She snapped her head back and jerked herself half out of the lethargy. Could she believe her ears! That haunting, insistent voice was uttering the merest of commonplaces in this most tragic of situations: —

"My *dear*, it is such a pleasure to meet you again, though under such unfortunate circumstances."

Again that eerie note of mocking laughter.

Thoroughly aroused now, Helen turned toward the figure on horseback. It was the veiled form of a woman — yes, the Gentle Sister of Veilleux, who had evidently ridden back to talk to her. But she had never *met* her before. What did she mean? She stared up at her face in the darkness.

"You don't remember me, Miss Waldron? You *ought* to — look closer!"

So that she might be more easily recognized in the gloom, the holy nun removed her half-concealing headdress and, with an ironical bow, leaned over from the saddle.

"Oh!" — the one syllable was eloquent with infinite terror — "You!"

The rich, throaty notes of that voice, those eyes that burned like the tawny rovers of the jungle, that wealth of hair, which seemed to shimmer even in the darkness, Helen recognized now.

The Gentle Sister of Veilleux was Hilda von Rintelen.

The spy — the woman who had helped to kill her sister!

To the rider on the horse it was a triumphant moment and she continued the exquisite torture.

"You are not glad to see me? Well, never mind; I am your hostess, so to speak. It is not a very pleasant journey, is it? And it is my duty to entertain you."

On and on she talked with an airy lightness of tone that was not at all stolidly Teutonic, but then she had spent much of her life in gay Continental capitals and by birth she was an Austrian. Cruel she might be, but when not

bent on the dreadful business of Berlin, her nature often reflected the gleams of the beautiful blue Danube, and echoed the laughter of waltz-loving Vienna.

"And how is that fond father of yours? I still keep in touch with America — *dear* America where I had such good times — I know he is taking a *vacation*, a *prolonged* one, I fear, but I hope he is enjoying it. Ah! but he was a fool, so easy to twist round one's little finger.

"You Yankees are all so easy — what is the nice little word, you clever Americans use? — 'boob' — that is it. Well, you are a nation of great big boobs.

"And so are the poor, trusting French.

"It was a wonderful trick. Ah, but you must hear all the details. It was so amusing. You would enjoy them, n'est-ce pas?"

She glanced down, relishing the picture she saw — a picture that would have stirred any but Germans to pity — the girl seemed so frail and almost tottered as the Uhlans drove her on.

"Yes, it was a beautiful trick, but very difficult! I had to crawl out over that awful No Man's Land in this heathenish costume and lie for hours on the damp ground with explosions every once in a while.

"Then those countrymen of yours took me in, and, oh, the *shocking* story I told! Horrors, it makes me shudder now! But, to use another of your very clever expressions, the poor simple French 'fell for it,' but then they are superstitious, or religious, which amounts to the same thing. It is all silly, for when we die — there is nothing more. So we had much better lead a jolly life with lots of adventure and excitement, 'something doing,' as you say, all the time.

"And everybody was so kind, the people of Veilleux and some officers, they told me all their troubles and — all the news. And when they would n't tell me, I listened, everywhere I went. It was only one short month, but I got such a lot of information.

"Then the little trick with the candle! The hardest part of that was learning the Morse code. I hate study, and it was so long before I could learn all those tiresome dots and dashes.

"But I did and I found out what we wanted to know. You see the result — the big drive at the weak point, and as a little side issue, you are my guest to-night. Wonderful, was it not?

"And oh, that poor fool of a French sergeant, who came to see what the little light that

winked so oddly in the holy convent meant. It was hard to keep from laughing. I lay so still and — a pretty piece of business that was — to keep that little garment in my hand. He thought I was a saint and crossed himself."

Here her laughter rang out so loudly that the Uhlans stopped cursing and turned in their saddles to see what amused the lady so much. But of course they did not understand.

"Altogether I do not think Duse or the Divine Sarah herself could have done better. Was it *not* well done, my dear?"

So she went on, driving home the shafts that were worse than Uhlan lance-pricks, and satisfying at least a little her starving desire for vengeance on the girl whom von Arnheim had preferred. One can place the proper periods, dashes, and such in her recital, but not the ironical inflections, the sudden laughter, the cruel pauses with which she punctuated it.

"And how is that lover of yours — that rough, uneducated soldier? Oh, that grammar of his and those clothes he wore! Brrrr! The memory of it sets my teeth on edge. Such horrible taste! It would have been a mésalliance — but then it was all right after your father went away on that little *vacation*. You could n't look

much higher than a plumber, *now*, could you, my dear?"

Surely it was a *Via Dolorosa* for Helen, that journey.

"You did n't see your lover. *You* did n't know, my dear, that he was so near, just a few miles away with that Yankee brigade."

Helen started then and shuddered.

"But it is too late now. Oh! what a chance you missed! You will never see him again. But you are passably pretty — in a cold sort of way — and there are Prussian lovers, by the dozen, waiting you. And Prussians know how to love — not in the womanish way your Yankee men make love."

The girl pleaded with her then: "Tell me, was he killed?"

The figure on horseback shrugged its shoulders: "Doubtless — his brigade was cut to pieces. Now, is there anything else I can do to entertain you?"

Helen managed to gasp out: "If you have any mercy at all, *leave* me!"

"Very well." And, striking her horse's flank with her whip, Hilda von Rintelen galloped on toward the head of the column, calling after her in that same mocking tone, but with a new

note of fierceness in it: "You will never see him again, you fool."

The little hill, with the noble château upon its crown, loomed before them.

They had to carry the girl up the hill and through the portal of the château. On a bed in one of the magnificent but deserted upper chambers they laid her. She lay absolutely motionless through the long hours, while a sentry dozed before the door.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE EMPIRE GOWN

Old Mère Renard had her place in the sun, not the billions of square miles that the people across the Rhine covet (in preparation for their invasion of Mars, which they are planning after this war is over, to secure the neutrality of the air and the freedom of the ether), but a modest little spot, sufficient for herself and her cat, and located on the stone steps in the rear of the château kitchen, where once such magnificent meals had been prepared, but whose cupboard now, alas, was as bare as Old Madame Hubbard's.

Old and infinitely wrinkled was Mère Renard, and her straggling white hair was as snarled and matted as that of a gipsy child roaming through the tangled brush and burdock. It had not always been like this — once she had been the pink-and-white personification of neatness, a thrifty French housewife. But that was before the wild animals who walked like men and wore grey uniforms came bursting in the door, much as they had forty-four years before — a time of

sorrow she had considered enough for one lifetime.

In 1870 they had taken her own husband; in 1914 — her beautiful mistress and child — well, it is not good to tell their fate. Of the family she had faithfully served for almost three generations not a soul was left, though the noble château, whose walls had so often resounded to their laughter, still stood, its beauty unmarred save for a few gaping holes. When that last band of Kultured marauders had left, her wits had flown like chimney swifts, but like those feathered gamins of the air they returned every once in a while, so she was not quite as mad as the German officers, who made their headquarters here from time to time, imagined.

Garry, from the barred window of his impromptu cell, looked over the shock heads of the sentries reclining against the wall, across the wild sweet tangle that had once been a garden, and watched the old crone as she sat, her cavernous eyes rolling every now and then, but usually fixed with an intent stare on some phantom scene, which he could not see, but which was evidently being enacted very vividly in her own mind. For she constantly rolled from side to side the sagging under-jaw as if she were chew-

ing some bitter-sweet morsel, tickling the fastidious palate of Vengeance. Once she clapped her shrivelled hands, and now and then her huddled figure shook with a spasm of uncanny glee.

By her side blinked the cat, the only sleek and well-fed living thing in these parts — except the carrion crows and the German officers who came and went. Rats were very plentiful in such places in Northern France.

Its color was a velvet tawny, its eyes green shot with yellow. The whole color scheme and feline grace of the creature reminded Garry (for most human beings have their four-legged counterparts; study the passers-by on any busy street and you will almost believe in reincarnation) — reminded him of the distinguished Mrs. Rintelen. The comparison may have been a little exaggerated, but Garry had good reason for prejudice.

It was quite uncanny, for looking up just then, he saw a hand thrust a curtain back at an upper window — the hand was followed by a face — that of the handsome Mrs. Rintelen herself.

The old woman rose stiffly, with bent back, and entered the kitchen. Slowly she walked through several rooms till she came to a broad

staircase, which she ascended, and entered the room where Helen, although the sun was within a few minutes of the northwest horizon, still lay, deep in the merciful slumber that succeeded the long strain.

Mère Renard shook her, gently at first, then more forcibly. Helen opened her eyes and looked in bewilderment at the withered face, then at the mirrors and the graceful Louis Quinze furniture of the room, which was very beautiful still, despite its disorder and the crude obscenities scrawled — in German — on the walls.

"Hurry, dearie, and dress, for the officers will be calling for you soon."

"They may call, but I will not go," the girl answered.

The old crone laughed, but there was no mirth in that laughter, and the walls of the old place echoed it derisively.

"Do wolves from the forest go back when a pretty child shakes her head at them and stamps her little foot, 'Nay, Nay'? — You have not been long in France, my dear."

The chimney swifts had come back to their nests for a little space, and quite sanely and pityingly the ancient, withered face scanned the fresh and fair features.

"In the days of peace your beauty may be your strength, but in the days of war it is your peril. Once I was young like you, and Pierre and Jean — oh, so many of them in the village said I too was fair — but then the wolves came and they had no mercy. The breed of 1870 was fierce, but they suckled still fiercer — and they are here to-day."

One can shudder and believe in horrible tales but it is hard to think of one's self as the victim, quite as hard as it is to realize one's own mortality, but the breast that rose and fell, and the eyes that tremblingly opened and shut, were proof that Helen at last understood.

Mère Renard raised one wizened red finger.

"There is one way."

"Tell me," Helen implored.

"It is short."

"It could not be too short."

"It is sharp."

"I will try to be brave."

"Many beautiful ladies of France have tried that way."

"And do you not think an American girl could be as brave?"

The hollow old eyes looked into the tremulous grey-blue ones.

"I know you would, my child."

"It is?"

"Just a few drops — then swift release — and the good God will surely forgive."

Through the window Helen could see the sky and a rambler rose on its trellis — one was as blue and as peaceful, the other as red and as fragrant, as if these had not been evil days. Life was sweet, but she took the vial and hid it in her breast.

She rose and went to the window, and together they looked out over the garden, the lawns, and the lovely groves of the place to the white ribbon of road that curved toward the sunset. A mile away an automobile raced around the bend, approached the château park, and entered the gate.

"They come," said Mère Renard, and left the room.

A half-hour later there was a pounding at the door. Before Helen had time to reply, it was opened in unchivalrous Teutonic fashion. And in, a thick-set, loutish, machine-like orderly stamped, ejaculating some command in guttural German.

"The Herr Colonel says supper is served and commands the woman to come quickly."

Her hands flew to her throat; then the little vial met her fingers with its chilling suggestion.

The orderly left.

"If it must be — but not yet. If Garry is dead — it might as well be, for I could never be happy again. But Mrs. Rintelen is cruel. She might have lied — she *has* lied — oh, God grant that she lied," came the strange, incongruous, but heart-rending prayer. Her head sank — "It is not right to go — until the last."

Then something at least of her sanity and her golden common sense and courage came rushing back, and she cried aloud: "There *must* be some other way out!"

Pacing feverishly back and forth in the gathering gloom, her forehead struck a door that stood ajar. It opened into a deep closet shrouded in dust and darkness and she entered it. At the farther end hung something like a woman's form. She jumped back, then laughed at her fears. It was only a gown of the poor lady who had once lived here so happily.

She took it from the hanger and to the light. It was an exquisite gown of pale yellow, shimmering satin, cut in the old Empire style.

"I wonder" — a second she pondered with her finger against her lips. "I'll try it."

Quickly she doffed the stained ambulance khaki in which they had thrown her on the bed, and removed the grime and dust from face and arms and throat, with the bucket of cold water which Mère Renard had brought. It took much energy and scrubbing, and she was quite out of breath when she had finished, but the stimulus of action and cold water buoyed her spirits.

"I'm glad, after all, that I have n't all the modern improvements, for cold water is much more bracing than hot and I'll need all the nerve ever a girl had."

Her tan boots and puttees suddenly loomed, monstrously, she thought, below her. Frantically she searched the deep closets. No footwear there. And how she wished for some of those dozens she used calmly to order in one visit at Cater's on Fifth Avenue!

Her eyes searched the room. The drawers of the lovely old-fashioned dresser were half-pulled out. Over the rim of one hung the silken toe and heel of a champagne-colored stocking, pathetic relic of the fair mistress of the room. Helen peered into the drawer. Under the tumbled confusion of dainty feminine things, desecrated by loutish hands, she saw the slender toe of a slipper to match. There was its mate.

Absorbed in the task of arraying herself, for a moment Helen forgot the seriousness of her plight, as women will even in the face of Death.

Darkness had fallen, but Helen had noticed an old-fashioned brass chandelier, with sockets for candles, still swinging from its place in the ceiling. On the dresser were two half-used candles, and, by the help of a chair, she fitted them in place and lighted them, starting strangely flickering shadows through the room.

A face looked forth at her from the glass — a little white, a little drawn, and very tense, but lovely in outline as of old.

If Garry could have looked over her shoulder just then, he would have truthfully sworn that the tendrils of her brown hair, which had so many gold gleams in the light, wavered around the white curve of her forehead as bewitchingly as ever. Surely the grey-blue eyes were as sweet as when he used to admire them, shyly and reverently wondering if he would ever be worthy of her.

But you can't see around the long right angle of a great château to the other wing unless you have a periscope as long as those stovepipes in the early meeting-houses. So instead of this picture, which he would have given a very great

deal to see, Lieutenant Garry, all unconscious of her nearness, was gazing at the block of wood, which, covered by stubble and a field-cap, served for a head on the squarish shoulders of the sentry outside. He was also studying one or two others who were pacing back and forth in the gloom of the groves and the twilight shadows of the formal lawns, trying to figure out the exact number of the guard and figuring his chances for escape.

"About as good," he decided, "as Hearst has of being elected Governor of New York."

Meanwhile, up in the chamber in the west wing, Helen's momentary forgetfulness in the feminine task of arraying herself to carry out her little strategy, was rudely shattered by the sight of some lines scrawled across the lower left hand of the mirror. They were in German like the obscene inanities on the wall, but were evidently written by an officer of some education, if you can so dignify the stuff drilled into obedient Teutonic heads at their factories of learning. Helen's French was fluent, her German anything but that; but she held a candle toward the angular characters and managed to translate them, for they were very simple after all. Roughly paraphrased they ran something like this: —

"Rosy lips and beaming eyes
Are the conquering hero's prize;
Better yield for caution's sake,
What you grant not he will take."

Kultur's slap direct in her face! The two figures sprang back from each other.

Her fingers groped for the little vial. It was cold, yet it almost scorched her fingers.

Then she steadied herself and her shoulders and lips straightened.

"There must be — there *will* be, some way of beating those insufferable brutes."

On her knees she sank by the bed, which forthwith became the ancient mercy seat, as any place in the world, royal throne, the machine in the sweat-shop, or rough bed in a prison cell, may be; and there in the old, old way she found consolation and strength for the ordeal before her. But she prayed more for Garry than for herself — that he might be alive and unharmed, that he might be happy and ever guarded from danger.

In the great high-ceilinged banqueting-hall, to gain which Helen must soon traverse the long upper hall, a wide staircase, the broad hallway, and an ante-room, old Mère Renard was busied, setting six tall candles in the silver candelabra,

which she caressed almost lovingly, for they were old family heirlooms and had so often illuminated happier celebrations and gentler guests. Eight officers of varying rank lounged in the massive, deep-cushioned chairs, using others for foot-rests for their muddied boots, their careless spurs scratching the rich detail of the exquisite carving. Jovially they discussed the successful advance "Nach Paris" under von Ludendorf, for von Hindenburg, the iron man of the Masurian Marshes, was now in his twilight.

A simple-minded orderly, delegated to help the old woman who was the only servitor left in the château, almost dropped the smoking platter he was carrying as he entered the room. There before him, on the dark wainscoted wall, deeply stained by Time, bobbed and danced in the candle-light, the queer, distorted reflection of the old crone's already distorted figure. In and out of the tarnished, cobwebbed shields and armory high on the walls, the queer question mark of a figure capered, like a witch-hag of his own Black Forest. Now, all the while she had been circling around the table, her sagging jaw moved from side to side, in that queer way, and she laughed quietly to herself, her crooked, bony shoulders and bent back shaking in silent

mirth. Any one who had observed her would have thought with the officers that she was quite, though harmlessly, mad. In addition to this characterization, they had decided long ago that she belonged to the "Gute Leute" — the caption chalked on many doors in Belgium and Northern France, preserving the inmates from destruction — a queer indication of German psychology, "good people" meaning all who favored the German cause. So they had placed her in this Class A 1 of the treacherous and craven, which was quite what the old woman desired. For half of her madness was real, the rest but the infinite cunning of the very old and the vengeful.

And she also had her little stratagem, as Helen had hers, and Garry was trying to figure out his. That night would show which was the best.

Seeing the superstitious orderly's sudden ague of fear, she increased her muttering and miming, and with a "Donner und Blitzen" he dropped the platter, the gravy further muddying the uniform of a Jäger major, who sat near the door.

He clipped the offending soldier over the ear and sent him staggering against the wall, and the chief officer among them, with a general's

insignia on his uniform, whose nerves had been recently unstrung by ghosts of the innocent that haunted him, with an oath brought his heavy fist down, smashing the carving of the chair, and shouted to the old woman: —

"——— stop that mumbling, or I'll have that withered tongue torn from your crazy throat."

Then, looking at his watch, he commanded her: —

"Your beauty takes too long at her dressing. Tell her to come at once — *schnell!*"

He tossed her a piece of gold and she hobbled after the bright disk as it rolled into the dust in the corner, the officers roaring at her antics. Seizing it, she placed it between her four remaining teeth, two on the upper, two on the lower jaw, and bit it. Satisfied, she backed toward the door, bobbing and curtsying.

"Such gallant officers, such noble gentlemen, you are kind to a poor old woman!"

But as she ascended the stairs, she muttered to herself: —

"Ah! they think I am mad — mad — but they shall see! They shall see!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE UNWILLING GUEST

HELEN started as the knob turned and the door opened, but it was only old Mère Renard, and the look on her face was kindly. The bent figure, so small and light of weight it seemed that a wind might blow her away, came nearer. She saw the yellow gown and clasped her hands with some quaint old French expression, calling on all the saints in the calendar.

"Ah! my dear, you are very bonny! And you look like her, just like her. She wore that gown on her wedding day, only a year before *they* came across the river. Her mother — she was married so young, only a slip of a girl — she wore it before her, and long before that — in 1870 it was — her mother's mother. Three weddings it has seen — three weddings and three deaths. Each time the bridegroom was slain. And my dear mistress wore it on her anniversary, when the Uhlans last came — that was when they killed my poor master — It is the gown of love and death."

The old woman was on her knees, clutching the skirt in both hands convulsively.

"Look there — those spots!"

Helen looked down — yes, on the bodice, below her breast, three irregular brown circles stained its shimmering beauty, where the poor mistress of the château had pillowed his dying head.

The chimney swifts had flown again and the old woman shrilly called: —

"It is, *it is* the gown of love and death!"

Helen shuddered — she could not help it.

"Perhaps, after all, *that* is the way out. Its spell may work again."

Whispering one little prayer, with head bent low, she descended the broad stairway toward the light that flickered through the ante-room from the banqueting-hall, upon the polished floor of the hallway. As she neared the door she straightened and entered the room proudly, with all the grace and thoroughbred bearing of the old days. But the old woman, as she crossed the threshold, once more started to mutter crazily, and, nodding significantly at the girl, winked evilly at the officers.

Helen marched straight toward the empty seat with eyes fixed apparently on the shields upon the wall, past the officers, who, having just finished their toast to the Kaiser, bent from the

waist with stilted, wooden, Prussian bows and very mock civility.

She reached her place, still staring above their heads. She sat down, then raised her eyes to the level of the officers'.

The personnel of seven of the diners — the fat pink colonel, commandant of the château, the bearded, mathematical general of division, the stupid Jäger major, the Uhlan captain, and the staff officers, and all but one sensitive, kindly-looking subaltern who did n't count, very Prussian and synonymously haughty and sensual and cruel — she gauged at a glance, and the measuring was not reassuring. But they mattered not, for her eyes sought the figure at her right, first the pretzel-like shoulder-straps which proclaimed him a major-general, then the features —

For host at dinner that night she was to have the murderer of her sister!

Most of the Seven Deadly Sins abhorred by our forefathers registered themselves in swift succession on the face of General the Count von Arnheim then. Wotan and Thor and the whole gang of German deities, which the Teutons really worship under the name of their composite Gott, were with him that night. A beauty he had been

led to expect from his subordinates' tales, but not the girl who less than a year before had been stolen from his grasp in the very hour of his triumph. Instead of a glass of thin sour wine, they had given him one of the rarest vintage. But he would sip his vengeance slowly — so on his dramatizations strutted through his head, for he was still the arch-type of the Prussian in all things but one and that he had in common with his master — he could n't help being theatric and spectacular. As a matter of fact the whole Junker brood has a bombastic touch of it, though entirely without poetic imagination.

But he modulated his voice to that of the old Frederick Arnold, and Helen heard — the merest of commonplaces, the same sort of thing Mrs. Rintelen, who now sat at his right, handsome as always and attired in a dress of light blue she had foraged in the château, had said when she first disclosed her identity the night before.

"A most unexpected pleasure, my dear Miss Waldron. Will you not permit us to drink your health?"

The fountain that had always played on the formal lawn outside the window had been dry these last four years, but its stone figure of some

nymph was still poised in graceful attitude. Von Arnheim might as well have addressed his remarks to that nymph.

For Helen sat quite as motionless and unheeding, her body bent forward, her hands gripping the arms of the chair, her eyes tightly closed. She had nerved herself for an ordeal, but not an ordeal by fire, such as this was. Hope had flown out of that high-arched window, and with it her desperate little plan of foiling the officers in some feminine way, of charming them, of appealing to their better senses — by some means, she had not known quite what. It was to carry out this hopeless little stratagem that she had taken such time and pains at her toilette.

And such horrible memories the presence of the man at her side recalled — she shuddered — was Mère Renard's way the only one, after all? No — she would fight to the last. Her eyes opened.

The suave Frederick Arnold voice was speaking again: —

"I beg to repeat — will Miss Waldron honor us with her permission to drink her health?"

Still she was as mute as the statue outside.

The modulations of that voice thickened a little with ugliness: —

"Remember, I am not a guest in your home in New York — *you are my guest behind the German lines.*"

Then to the others: —

"Gentlemen, the lady is proud — but we will drink her health whether she will or won't." He raised his glass, "To the one desirable thing I found in idiotic Yankee land — Miss Waldron."

With hoarse laughter they drained their glasses, most of them at one guttural gulp.

She sprang from her place, but von Arnheim grasped her wrist and pulled her back into the chair.

"Come, come, don't be a fool. I can be amiable if you will — and I can be a very good disciplinarian when it is necessary."

With much clatter and conversation the officers fell to. Trifles narcotic-like distract one's attention in very critical situations, and Helen noticed with disgust that while they did not quite descend to eating with their knives, there was little of courtliness about their manners; not that etiquette had been left in Berlin on August 1, 1914, — their lack of breeding was natural to the brutes, she decided. The exceptions were the poor little fish-out-of-water subaltern, the bearded, mathematical division general, and

he was too abstracted to notice or care what happened, and von Arnheim, whose courtesy was such a cat-and-mouse, exquisite-torture sort of thing, it would have made her shiver, even if she had known nothing about the man.

Attempt after attempt he made to engage her in conversation. Her lips never once moved. Her head was still averted.

The situation was little more to Mrs. Rintelen's liking than to Helen's. Only the crumbs of her lover's attentions were tossed to her, and these in surly disdain. The handsome Hilda was only biding her time, and he — well, he was so thoroughly tired of her insatiable appetite for devotion that he had already determined to discard her and fling her to one of his subordinates that very night — *he* could find *better* entertainment *elsewhere*.

Mrs. Rintelen was a very complete little swearer. She could consign people, in her velvety voice, to undesirable localities in a greater variety of ways than Jeff. *His* expletives always had a homely flavor — they were racy of the soil; but *hers* had a Continental finish — she could swear in so many different languages, even Esperanto probably. She seemed to be doing that now, under her breath, only it was

her luck that she was thus impolitely apostrophizing. Why had von Arnheim arrived tonight! She had hoped, now that her last mission was finished, to meet him in Brussels at the end of the week. And now he had made this place his headquarters! And at the very moment that that pale fool of a girl had been brought here! Why had n't that thick-headed Uhlan captain taken her for himself, instead of bringing her to this place, of all places!

The reason was immediately revealed by a loud, drunken, boastful conversation between the stupid Uhlan captain himself and the commandant in charge of the château and the temporary prison-camp a half-mile from it. By rank a colonel, he was a stout, squarish, very anti-Hooverish sort of an officer, quite pink in neck, jowl, and cheeks, in which the eyes were mere watery creases, and pink even in the scalp of his almost hairless head. He was related to the very first family of Berlin and the Universe by some subway love-route of indiscreet Royalty, and like his six husky near-cousins or brothers, the "Slackers Six," he had heard the voices afar off, but had not felt the breath of the guns. But then he had been grievously afflicted with stomach complaint and gout, for which his distin-

guished relative had conferred on him the order of the Black Eagle.

Helen heard all the conversation, the purport of which she did not at first gather — it was quite too monstrous to comprehend at once, even with a more perfect German than hers: —

"Of my so admirable taste you approve." The Uhlan's thumb pointed at Helen.

"Ja wohl."

"Then for that trifle of honor debt, a little receipt write."

The Uhlan captain produced a dirty note or I O U and a fountain pen from somewhere under his tunic.

With drunken clumsiness the sanguine colonel spread the greasy slip of paper on the table and made three attempts to write his name, his fat pink head lolling on the linen, his pink tongue slobbering in harmony. At last he succeeded in making some sort of mark, which looked like the track of an ink-immersed horse-fly crawling across the sheet, then waved it in the air and handed it to the grinning and not quite so drunk Uhlan. The colonel reached across the table toward Helen and sprawled over the napery, upsetting a wine-glass, which splashed its contents on her bodice, making the gown more than

ever the one of death the old crone had pronounced it. He reached for the girl's hand, mouthing a peculiar idiom of that hated tongue, which really ought not to be repeated these days, an expression whose only American equivalent is —

"Bought and paid for! Bought and paid for!"

Their revolting gestures pieced out the conversation.

"Bought and paid for." It was far worse than the unpleasant situation of that play which had given such delicious thrills to feminine matinée audiences, back in America — Helen remembered seeing it in Cleveland some six years back — for here she was the price of a gambling debt between two loutish Huns!

She rose, thrust back her chair, overturning it in her anger, heavy as it was, and started to leave the room. But again von Arnheim's clasp of her wrist, as vise-like as any handcuff, threw her back in her chair.

He raised one finger and the captain on his staff who had been sitting next the drunken colonel came forward. Turning to Hilda von Rintelen, von Arnheim commanded with crisp curtness: "Exchange places with the captain."

"What do you mean?" she snapped back in fury.

"Do as I tell you."

"So you are really throwing me over for that thin-blooded Yankee prude!"

"So — my dear Hilda — I'm tired of you. Variety is the seasoning of love. I've taken the girl from the colonel. I leave you to him — a fair exchange. Quite an honor, too, for besides two gallons of alcohol he has at least a pint of near-royal blood in his veins. Not exactly a virile figure, my dear Hilda, but you are fading yourself, — pretty fast — *gar nicht?*"

She gave one swift look at the fat pink figure clawing drunkenly at the table. Now, von Arnheim was an unwitting chemist experimenting with very dangerous chemicals, — scorn, jealousy, thwarted love, elements that are very explosive when poured in just the right proportions into the test-tube of a feminine heart. Mrs. Rintelen's was already near boiling over — that last little taunt tossed in was the very thing needed to ignite the whole compounding. There were danger sparks in those tawny eyes — she whirled on him. —

His fist struck her wrist-bone and the dagger spun in whirling lightnings across the crystal and

silver until its point struck but an inch from the prostrate colonel's head.

The wrangling conversation hung suspended in mid-air. And all, even those officers who had actually had their baptism of T N T, stared fascinated. Somehow it seemed the very essence of frightfulness — that sharp pretty instrument, quivering there.

Then von Arnheim spoke: —

"For you," he said to Mrs. Rintelen, "that will be sufficient."

To the two orderlies: —

"Take the lady to her room."

And to old Mère Renard: —

"You have the keys to the rooms of the women. Lock her in and bring the key to me. And remember — as I said before — you are a living scarecrow now. I'll make you a dead one and hang you up in yonder field, if she escapes."

Well had the mathematical, bearded general of division dined. Having no stomach for frivolity of this sort, he rose, summoning his two staff officers, and they left the room.

Ascending behind the two orderlies, who were forcing the struggling, panther-like form of the enraged Hilda up the stairs, old Mère Renard

heard the purring of the general's motor as he whirled away to join his division. She counted off three on her shrivelled fingers with another little spasm of glee. So much that helped her little stratagem.

When she returned, she neglected to hand over the key to General von Arnheim and in the conversation that followed this was not noticed.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE VINTAGE OF 1870

THERE were prospects for a quite delightful evening ahead, but von Arnheim suddenly remembered that he had first to transact a little business for Berlin. In reward for his beautiful work in America he had been given a major-general's commission, with a tinsel order or two, now displayed on his breast, thrown in, and also the chief post in the secret service operating west of the Rhine, with sort of an *ex-officio* supervision of the prison-camps in the war zone. He was particularly anxious to interview some American officers who had been captured.

No information—nothing but alcoholic fumes—could come from the prostrate commandant, so he asked the captain on the latter's staff: —

"Any American prisoners in your charge?"

"Yes, General, nineteen."

"Any officers?"

"Only one, a lieutenant; I have him in the stable on the grounds. I have saved him for your coming. Those Americans fight like devils. We cannot capture many. They do not surrender to us when they should."

"Sssstt — silence! Impossible — there are *too few* of them in France to be captured, you mean — our submarines have attended to that." And he looked at Helen.

"Let me see the list."

The captain handed him the paper.

The old gleam of triumph that Helen had seen in the tower on that fatal night, almost a year ago now, and which she remembered too well, flashed again in von Arnheim's eyes. For there at the top of the list of the one sergeant, two corporals, and fifteen buck privates in the larger prison-pen near by, was the name of the man imprisoned on the château grounds: —

"Lieutenant James G. Owen."

With some German imprecation his fist smote the table till all the dishes and glasses clattered. Twice favored by Fortune that same night! The girl in his power — and now her ignorant boor of a soldier-lover! — who should be busy mending drains or sewer-pipes.

"Bring him in."

With the cringing look of his class and a jerky salute, the orderly departed.

It was just one little sentence he said to Helen, clothed with the courtesy of drawing-room small talk. "Let me show you the con-

servatory," or, "You must meet Mr. So and So," it might have been, but she recognized that a world of hate lay behind that sentence: —

"I want you to meet one of your own countrymen. It will be pleasant for you — it will be some time before you hear the Yankee accent again."

While the feast was so merrily progressing in the great château on the hill, Garry was discussing his, — a tin cup of water and a populous chunk of black bread.

His head throbbed painfully, his stomach was empty, but he ate not a mouthful — he was literally *discussing* the black chunk of bread, in pardonable language, with the two rats, who blinked, one in a triangular crevice near his ear, the other one on the edge of the straw under the window.

"You *are* two cheerful bunkies — two regular glooms, I should say. Now, you are the Kaiser, you big fellow there in the hole — now, don't say no. You're a darned good likeness with your cruel eyes and your whiskers. Just twirl 'em up and you'd be his double. And you there" — throwing the bread at the other — "you're Mr. Arnold, just a little ole copy of the Kaiser. But both of you have got something

coming. We're going to put you in a rat-trap one of these days — and you'll never get out." Said conversation being simply designed to keep up his courage — for his prophecy seemed very remote with the great German advance on, and he himself in an improvised calaboose.

Prophecies of the future gave way to the exigencies of the present when he heard the orderly's voice outside and the sentry unlocked the door, ordered him to get up, and haled him toward the château, through the kitchen, and the various connecting chambers, past the buzzing field telephone established in the anteroom, till he stood, swaying a little uncertainly, in the light of the doorway of the banqueting-hall. He was wounded and weak, and after the darkness of his prison even the candle-light blinded him.

His vision came back gradually, to rest astonished, then enraged, on von Arnheim. But all the sign the American gave was one glare of hate, then a sound which was a cross between a sneer and the disgusted "Huh" he used to grunt when, on the old town common, his bat connected with the empty air three times — with the bases full.

As the boy half-turned on the hated figure in

the grey general's uniform, he saw Helen — for the first time that night, for the first time since their glances had met across that court-room. Her eyes yearned over him as she saw the matted hair, crusted with dried blood, the rough, half-torn-off bandage at his neck. And all the boy could see for a moment were those grey-blue eyes that had troubled and tormented him and yet which were the only ones in the world that could bring him peace.

It was a banquet and she was in festival attire at von Arnheim's side. Yet he doubted her not — he had made that bitter mistake before. Even if he had questioned, his suspicions would have vanished under that look of tenderness that was almost maternal, that little suggestion of a gesture of her hands, which started to flutter toward him, as if she would have taken him in her arms and laid his head upon her breast. But realizing their utter helplessness, the pitying hands dropped to her side.

One step forward he made as if he, too, would have taken her in his arms, but a blow, a rude crack across the chest, that carried insult as well as force, sent him, weakened as he was, reeling backwards into the grip of the soldiers.

All the grandiloquence, the miming, the exaggerated courtesy were gone from von Arnheim's manner now. The veneer was very thin and constantly cracking. Nothing remained now save a cold, a very cold and very murderous hate. It was not exactly the pretty look his photographer would have suggested.

"Keep your dirty hands to yourself, Schweinhund. This lady is not to be touched by the low-born, even if you have stolen an officer's shoulder-straps. The lady belongs to me."

Helen averted her head. There was a despairing twitching at the corner of her throat. But summoning all her courage she answered him for the first time that night: —

"Own me, *you!!* Yes, in one way — if you kill me."

A shrug of the shoulders and a "Very well, we shall see," was his only comment.

Garry's shoulders lurched spasmodically as if he was crouching for a spring at her insulter, but the sentry's grip on his arm and a voice within, supernaturally clear and cold, warned him, "Wait."

Rapidly he ran over the mental diagram of their position. Regiments of troops were encamped on the other side of the road, but they

were a kilo away, and the guards at the prison-pen were too far off to matter.

He had to reckon with the three sentries on the château grounds, the signal-man at the field telephone in the ante-room, and here — two orderlies, von Arnheim, and two officers (the other two he observed had suddenly been stricken with alcoholic paralysis). Nine to one — heavy odds — he obeyed the voice and waited.

Meanwhile a question was aimed at him.

"How many troops has America in France?"

It was not answered.

"If you are prudent, it will be better for you. To be prudent means to give me a little information. I repeat — how many troops has America at the front?"

"I can't give the exact number of the regiments, but perhaps I can tell it in terms of divisions."

"Ja wohl." And von Arnheim looked mollified and expectant.

"Well — I should figure that by next fall we will have enough — to send you back where you belong — beyond the Rhine."

The distinguished general did n't look quite so distinguished, purple and choking over this

information, but he managed to snort an answer: —

"Maybe you will give a different reply in the morning. Herr Captain," he said to the officer who, now that the colonel was indisposed, was in charge of the château, "do you think you can beat this dog into a little more amiable frame of mind by to-morrow at nine?"

The Herr Captain was sure of it; in fact, his mouth seemed to water at the prospect. Von Arnheim started to dismiss his prisoner when a whim, characteristically cruel, tickled his fancy. Another little sip of revenge.

"But first, to entertain our guest, we will arrange a little tableau — living pictures you call them, do you not, Lieutenant?"

" *You* are the leading lady," he said to Helen. "Be so good as to step here!"

As she did not heed the command, the officer nearest grasped her arm roughly and hustled her to the chair of his chief.

The vulgarity and puerility of what followed, more than the undisguised sensuality of his face, showed how far he had degenerated from the once polished and able, if utterly unscrupulous, diplomat who had controlled the great German secret service in America.

"Sit here." The Count's arm encircled her waist and he drew the trembling girl down by sheer force to his lap.

"A pretty tableau, is it not? It is entitled 'Off with the old love, on with the new.'"

Loud and long laughed the officers, but Garry, with every last ounce of strength in his body, wrested himself free from the sentries and leaped for his enemy's throat. Von Arnheim's quick eye had seen, and the answering blow, deliberately placed, struck him on the wounded jaw.

"Oh — oh — oh!" Helen's voice moaned piteously as she saw the red welling through the bandage.

The fastidious count wiped his hand in disgust as if the very blood of an American fouled his fingers. Any one would have understood the significance of the gesture.

When he had finished with this theatric and insulting manœuvre, he addressed Helen: —

"Very well, for your little stubbornness you shall pay a high price. Look your last on your sweetheart, there. For if you do not come to me to-night and willingly, I'll have your low-born lover crucified, where you can see."

The vial, the vial, — her fingers groped for it — but that would not save *him*. Would God for-

give her if she gave herself to save the man she loved and who had done so much for her? — Was n't that other woman, two thousand years ago, forgiven — because she loved much? — There were only a few syllables to the prayer she whispered then.

Like a stricken thing she turned to the German.

"If you will let him go — back to America," the lips moved but so thin and faint came the words that it seemed as if the voice that spoke them and the spirit that willed them were far removed from the cold lips and the lovely but lifeless body — "I'll — do — what you ask."

"Not that!" Garry gasped out — "let them kill me. It's better. I could be happy then, but never now."

But von Arnheim rubbed his hands, an action reminiscent of the old Liberty Insurance Company régime.

"The bargain is made. Come here, old scarecrow; have n't you some better wine than this to drink the new toast? Think hard!"

Mère Renard did not need to be urged. She bobbed and curtsied and chortled, to the hoarse laughter of the officers.

"Ah, yes, messieurs, I have hidden away a

fine wine, a *beautiful* wine — for a great celebration only. It is a wine fit for such noble gentlemen. It is a very rare vintage. There is none like it in the whole country now — It is of the vintage of 1870."

"Ha, ha," the officers at the table roared, "that is good — the vintage of 1870 — ha! ha!"

Grimacing and curtsying, the old crone hurried out, and at von Arnheim's command the two soldiers dragged Garry with them. Passing Mère Renard in the hall, with significant winks and business of placing imaginary cups to their lips, they indicated their desire for some of the rare wine.

"Ach, yes," she said, "you too shall have some of the wine — the vintage of 1870, ha! ha!" Her laugh rang wildly through the hall, and the soldiers tapped their heads with their fingers, muttering: "The old hag is dummkopf."

The stone walls of the underground stairway and the great cavernous cellar walls echoed to the old woman's uncanny mirth as she made her way toward the secret bin. Taking the ring of keys from her girdle, she unlocked, at the farther end of the cellar, a heavy door, whose lock was so rusted that it required all of her strength to turn.

Twelve dust- and cobweb-covered bottles stood on the shelf.

Her withered arms embraced their brown necks.

"Ah, my beauties, my jolly men, they think I am mad, but they shall see, they shall see! Not for nothing have I bowed and cringed and slaved for those beasts. You shall fight for me, my jolly men, and avenge you all," she cried, turning toward the shadows that danced in the underground passages, while the flickering candlelight made of her own face a ghoulish thing. "Yes, avenge you all, chères mesdames et messieurs." And she bowed low to the dancing shadows as if she saw in them the spirits of all she had loved, long since departed.

Six bottles she carried to the head of the cellar stairway, and, calling the orderly, whose knees "strafed" one another when he saw her crazed face, placed them tenderly in his shaking arms. Then back she hurried and fetched the remaining six, still talking endearingly to those bottles, in the way a French artilleryman makes love to his sweetheart, the famous "75."

Bidding the orderly, who was actually now more in awe of her than his superior officers, serve the wine, she hurried to the sentry pacing

the drive in front of the house, handed him a bottle, and then, with a queer goblin-like gait, hurried over to the stone prison into which Garry had just been thrust.

"We must save the pretty young lady, for she looks like my dear mistress, and the young man is brave, and they are both friends of France."

Anticipation was expressed in the sentry's face, but she kept the bottle under her arm, poking him in the paunch with her skinny forefinger and shrilling: "Te-he — te-he!"

And all with an old wife's cunning.

The superstitious sentry backed away.

Still the witchlike forefinger poked at him.

He muttered some oath in Platt-Deutsch.

"For —— —— stop, old woman."

Then she gave him the bottle and he raised it to his lips.

"Te-he — te-he — te-he!"

Again she poked him with her forefinger, but he never noticed it, for the liquor was gurgling down his throat now, very pleasantly, nor did he notice her other hand steal around and slip the key out of his pocket.

Garry, disconsolate on the straw, looked up to see the witchlike features at his little barred window. It would have frightened anybody —

that face — and he was startled. A piece of metal clanged on the stone floor and the apparition disappeared.

Back across the lawn danced the queer question-mark of a figure, so thin it more than ever seemed as if the night wind would blow her away. And even the groves seemed haunted with the ghosts of the departed watching her and breathing their benisons.

Then she bore the remaining "jolly men" toward the banqueting-hall. In the ante-room she noticed that the man at the telephone had retired and one of the drunken officers was even now staggering up the stairway. Two more gone — she nodded her head — that leaves seven.

"Fight well, my jolly men," she whispered, and crossed the threshold.

The pink colonel and the Jäger major still lay in their drunken slumber, but the two young officers had drained their glasses to the dregs. Helen's lay on the floor where she had dashed it. But von Arnheim still held his untasted, as he glowered at the girl.

The old woman fairly danced in; the crook almost seemed to vanish from her back, she to float airily about the room.

"Ah, messieurs, is it not a beautiful wine, this vintage of 1870?" she shrilled — and then came to where von Arnheim stood. "It is a rare wine. Why do you not drink? *Drink! — it is the vintage of 1870.*"

Her almost maniacal glee startled him. He grew suspicious and turned to the orderly.

"Give the old scarecrow a glass and *make* her drink it."

Curtsying gaily she took the glass.

"Will you not drink it, too, monsieur, it is such a rare wine — this vintage of 1870?" She drained it and then it crashed upon the floor.

"The vintage of Death!" she gasped.

"I thought so," said von Arnheim, but again she confronted him, holding even this cold superman spellbound with her merciless eye. The chimney swifts had winged their way home for the last time.

"You have not drunk, but your day will come as theirs has come. See — they swoon — a few moments and they will be gone — where you soon will go — you and all your race. You who dishonor women, who slay little children, who destroy all that is good and beautiful. For the sorrow you have brought upon the world, you will become a race accursed. Even as they who

killed the Christ suffered — so you will suffer — for you have killed Him a second time — Your hour is coming — and very soon."

She fell back. Helen, pitying, caught her, sank on one knee and supported the sinking head. One more spark of fire burned in the dying eyes. She raised her head and cried: —

"Vive la France!" — then fell back.

The chimney swifts had flown to some happier clime.

It was a swift and sure medicine for all earthly ills that lurked in that wine of the vintage of 1870, a swift and sure punishment for the crimes those dying officers had committed.

Von Arnheim had sunk back limply into his chair. For a little space he gazed at the convulsive twitchings of their features. But Helen had hidden her face in her hands.

A little later he recovered his composure and his old effrontery. He rose.

"It is not a pleasant sight — but come with me as you promised. We will find a way to forget."

The candles sputtered in their sockets. In the dim light something moved — a vaguely defined form, emerging from the curtains at the far window.

Von Arnheim turned and caught the gleam of a bayonet point, behind it a dishevelled figure with matted hair and bandaged jaw and very determined eyes.

"Look out, Helen!"

She jumped, but, recognizing the voice, shifted quickly to the right. Not fast enough, however, for the German seized her arm and held her between his body and that bayonet point. He whipped his hand to his hip, but the struggling figure of the girl jerked his arm away.

The advancing figure stood still — for one second.

He could n't risk the steel with Helen there.

Von Arnheim must not fire — a shot meant alarm and death —

Von Arnheim would soon get that pistol in spite of Helen.

Like three simultaneous bolts of lightning streaking across the sky those thoughts together flashed across his consciousness.

He met trick with trick.

"The old stunt, yellow as usual — don't you Germans *ever* fight like men?"

The bayonet was blocked, but that taunt got past the screen.

"It was my only chance," the German snarled.

It was odd how quickly his distinguished manners vanished.

"I'll give you another. Let the girl go. We'll fight man to man, unarmed."

Von Arnheim looked at the bayonet point, whose red smears showed why the orderlies did not come, with all a German's hate of cold steel and shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well, I cannot dictate terms."

"Take your hands off her. — Helen, unbuckle his belt."

It did not take her deft fingers long to unloose the strap.

The leather and metal dropped with a thud.

As Garry laid aside the rifle and advanced unarmed, von Arnheim scooped up his sword. It was characteristically foul. But a massive chair, hurled by Garry's hands, struck the trickster full in the chest and he staggered against the wall. He recovered and the point was within two inches of the boy's breast.

"Drop it!" It was a curt feminine command this time, emphasized by von Arnheim's own automatic.

Helen did not faint or scream while Garry fought. It was not her way. She had picked up that revolver from the floor and was quite

ready when the time came. Her hand was steady, her eyes open and alert, but she was praying all the time.

The revolver was insistent and the German started to obey. It was easy now with Helen on guard to bind him and get away, but —

Again those lightning flashes or glorious "hunches" which come to men of Garry's sort in time of danger. This German had murdered Jimmy and Betty. Twice he had threatened Helen with worse. If left alive, von Arnheim, as sure as Fate, would cross her path again. He must finish him *now*.

Helen's breast rose and fell rapidly but her eyes never faltered and Garry saw that, beautiful flower of civilization though she was, there was still in her nature the nobler part of the primitive, which made her understand, although he had not spoken. She herself would not have it any other way. It was decreed that he and their enemy must battle man to man to the end and she was not afraid.

The boy's boot was already on the dead cavalry officer's breast — one quick pull and the sabre scrunched from its scabbard.

"Mr. Woman-Killer prefers swords — he *has* a little nerve after all. Let him have his choice."

And then to the girl: —

"All right, Nell."

The automatic dropped an inch. That was enough, she thought.

They advanced — met — the shining blades crossed. Garry called on all those sabre lessons in old Troop D, but the German's superior skill told. He lunged viciously. Garry guarded. Another lunge. The air was full of the angry clashes of the steel. All he could do was parry and guard. He gave way again and backed hard into the massive table, almost smashing his hip. Still that infuriated sword — he crashed into a chair — side-stepped — his spur caught in cloth — he almost fell over the dead body lying there. Another candle flickered out and he recovered his balance in the darkness.

He was in the corner now. He rushed in turn. Every pound that was in those stout shoulders of his and more, that his love for Helen gave him, he put into that sabre-stroke, then von Arnheim retreated.

Back and forth, now in the feeble light, now in the shadow, they lunged and thrust and parried around the disordered, wine-stained table and over the prostrate bodies.

If life were measured by intensity, then Helen

Waldron lived centuries that night. Every movement of their bodies — crouch, thrust, and lunge — she unconsciously imitated with a graceful movement of her own — but she did not drop that automatic. Perhaps, woman-like, she would not have played fair if her lover fighting there had fallen.

At last Garry did fall, tripping over one of the bodies again. She raised the revolver, steadied it, but Garry, with a quick roll like a wrestler on the mat escaping a dangerous hold, just cleared the descending steel, whose point struck one of the dead bodies instead.

It was wrenched free. Garry was up again. One more circling of the room and von Arnheim, panting, backed to the other side of the table.

Again in Garry's brain flashed an old football instinct. It was the hurdle, since ruled out on account of its danger, but not by Garry that night. He leaped on the table, dashed across it, his heavy boots knocking silver and decorations aside and shattering the crystal in a thousand pieces, and, gaining the other side, he gave one downward thrust.

It only grazed the armpit. Garry leaped to the floor. Von Arnheim backed to the corner,

stopped short — and seven inches of the American's sabre flew across the room, the point embedding itself in the wall.

Helen rushed toward her lover. One glimpse of her face he caught, full of fear — for him. His out-thrust jaw set more grimly than ever. A lunge with the shortened sabre — another — and von Arnheim panted against the wall.

All the long line of the boy's hardy ancestors, Jeff, those boys on the troop-ships that von Arnheim had destroyed, Jimmy and Betty, the woman he loved, called on Garry Owen then. He heard. The jagged sabre plunged into the hilt and ended forever the career of Friedrich, Count von Arnheim.

The final choking sound was an epithet of scorn not good to hear from dying lips — the last stare one of hate. He ran true to type to the very last.

This was all that the boy could think of for a moment as they gazed down at the fast-glazing eyes of their enemy, and he muttered, partly to Helen and partly to himself: —

"I think that was why we hated him so. It was n't only for what he did to us. It seems as if the Devil wanted to take every kind of wickedness in the Germany we're fighting to-day

and put it into one human form — so he made — that."

With his passing, the last candle had flickered out and they were left in darkness. Garry swiftly searched the body for dispatches, found nothing — then turned toward her, stopped abruptly, and whispered: —

"Don't move."

A face peered in at the window.

Garry's hand gripped her wrist and held her motionless.

The face had a squarish outline — it was one of the sentries.

For one moment their hearts pounded.

It disappeared.

The crunching again on the gravel — growing fainter now.

"Hurry to your room and get your things," the boy whispered.

In the gloom she almost tore off the old Empire gown, with one swift reflection — its spell *had* worked once more. Thoughtful even in her weariness, she saved a strip of the dress, which, with the iodine still in her pocket, would make a rough dressing for Garry's wound. Then she donned the khaki costume and tiptoed down the stairs to find him, enveloped in a German

greatcoat, his eyes shaded by the visor of a field cap. Hastily he wrapped her in another coat, placed another cap on the fair brown hair. Then out over the lawn, by the stone prison cell, the slain sentry, the grove of trees just beyond, and on into the night they passed.

At midnight the officer of the guard discovered the motionless guests of the banquet of Death.

Later they released Hilda von Rintelen and she looked her last upon her lover.

She stayed only a little while, then went to her room again.

In the morning the officer of the guard noticed that there were new hard lines in her face, and in the once opulent gold of her hair broad streaks of ashen. She looked really old — and very bitter.

So she left the château and rode northward and forever out of the lives of Helen and Garry.

CHAPTER XXX

THE TRAIL

WHEN the war is over it will not take the Cook tourists long to cover the journey from the château to Veilleux, but it was a matter of full five days and nights for Garry and Helen.

Their progress was made only at night, and then very slowly, for it involved creeping over shell-pitted fields, rusting wire, and all the wreckage of a battle-field, eluding sentries and incoming and outgoing columns of troops. By day they lurked in the ruins of old village homes or *estaminets* that still afforded a few square feet of shelter, bravely subsisting on a short daily ration of biscuit or dried meat, which was all that Garry had had time to stuff into the pockets of the greatcoat, back at the château. The harvest of death had been so great in this often-fought-over sector that they must not drink of wells indiscriminately, even when no one watched, so they had to be very sparing of the little water in the boy's canteen.

It was the fifth night when they forded the little stream that curved around the village of

Veilleux, now in the hands of the Germans. Across the last few acres they crept, soaked to the skin and very hungry. Under the too large, flapping greatcoat, Helen's stockings and skirt were tattered, her knees bruised and bleeding.

"Not once has she complained — she is game to the core, as Jeff said," the boy thought, watching her tenderly. They headed for the convent, but lights showed that German soldiers were quartered there. One or two strolled across the fields, and motionless the boy and girl hugged the wall, until the Boches had disappeared in the darkness. At last in the village church, too ruined for billeting soldiers, they found sanctuary. Half of the roof still stood on its supporting arches and there was an underground cellar for refuge by day.

Helen sank on the floor, too exhausted to move. Tenderly Garry pillowed her head on his arms. She was too tired even for speech, but she patted his hand, then fell asleep. For three hours he scarcely stirred, but through the gaping walls watched the red flashes of the guns in the south, and listened to the monotonous undertone of their thunder.

At last, feeling it grow colder, he rose, stiffened all over. Taking his greatcoat, he rolled

it into a pillow and placed it under her head, gently stroking the fair, disordered hair, then sought his own hard resting-place a few paces away.

The next day passed and the sound of the guns grew nearer. This did not frighten them — there was only joy in their hearts, for it meant — *it meant* that the French were coming back and maybe their own boys with them.

Once Garry forgot and laughed aloud, almost dangerously.

"Hush!" said Helen, with her finger on her lips. "What's so funny, Garry?"

"Oh, I was just thinking about it all — the raid and everything. Nothing ran true to form — like the story-books and spy-plays, I mean. I did n't even find any nick-o'-time dispatches to bring home and save the army."

And of course they talked of many other things — you know they did — of separations and misunderstandings now forever healed. And sundown came and night fell and they were very happy, for the spirit is more than the body.

When it was dark they crept up the stairs to the nave of the little church and Garry said: —

"It's worth it all to have you again."

And for answer she pushed back the brown hair from the ruddy scar and kissed it.

"Garry, see, that altar is almost untouched. Let's plight our troth — I like that old-fashioned expression, don't you, dear? — there."

By the little altar they knelt, clasping hands, and kissed each other. And Garry, for all that he had said that he was not much on sky-piloting, whispered, at least in his heart, a crude, boyish one, too.

When they were through she said: —

"We ought to have lighted candles for the altar — but never mind" — and she pointed through the roof at the sky — "there are God's candles, they're best of all."

Another day dawned and the booming of the guns grew ever louder. Streams of wounded and disheartened German troops poured back through the village. Shells crashed around them again and again, but their noise was like music, for they knew they heralded the coming of the Allies.

Yes, they were coming! At Château-Thierry and Belleau Woods the tide of war had forever turned. And in the south the khaki and horizon blue were driving the grey and the green backward, ever backward. The Yanks *were coming*.

And Old Jeff Blake, jesting but grim and determined, little Joey Bernstein, the ex-slacker, Tommy Hughes, from Xenia, Ohio, and Sam Hosford, from Sandusky, same State, fighting for Ruby Baker in the old Sloane House, and even little tow-headed Heine Hyphenpfeiffer, the Cincinnati baker, who had had the hyphen knocked out at Château-Thierry and was redubbed by Old Jeff "Hank Pepper" — all were glorious letters in the history they were making that day for future generations.

The shells still screamed over and all around the church where Garry and Helen crouched. The one remaining wall of a building near by collapsed in a pile of dust and smoke.

"See that, Helen. That's the way the German Empire is going to collapse one of these days, — all-of-a-sudden."

She pointed through a crevice in the roof to where an Allied plane soared, all shimmering silver in the blue.

"The symbol of hope," she said.

Night again fell and they did not sleep, for thick and fast the German troops were retreating past them and the Allied artillery was ever advancing.

Then the last stand, and amidst the rattle of

rifle and machine-gun fire, the last Boche detachment was driven across the river.

If the guns had made music in their ears, the sounds they now heard were pæans of victory.

Hark! the sound of tramping feet and above the rifle-fire, the sound of boyish voices singing:

"Oh, Berlin road is long and rough,
But we will never fail,
For though the going may be tough,
We sure have hit that trail."

"Off with these darn Boche things," said Garry, and grey field caps and greatcoats they tossed into the corner.

Then a voice, a regular old Sixty-Ninth voice, called and they answered. Revolver and grenade in his hands, for he must watch for the old "Kamerad" trick, he ordered them to come out and they obeyed double-quick.

Garry's own company was two kilos away, and in the morning it was relieved. So behind the lines they met Old Jeff again. His deep "My, but it is good to see you, boy!" was very good to hear.

Then Helen's hands he gripped in his battle-stained own.

"My dear old friend," was all she said, but Jeff always remembers the accent, sweeter in

his memory than the first meadowlarks in the creek bottoms on his old ranch.

He was happy — would he not have given his life for either? — and he could read their secret, for it was very, very plain.

This secret was made public three weeks later. That was after a brief rest in Paris, twenty happy days they never will forget, a blessed time in which again they said many things and looked and thought still more.

And Helen read often to Garry, for he did not know much about books in cloth or leather bound, although he had well scanned the great living book of the world, whose covers are the blue of the sky, the pages the good brown earth, its illustrations the river and the sea, its characters living men and women and children.

Once she read from her old favorite, as groups of poilus and Yanks, Tommies, Colonials, and even Orientals, were passing under the balcony.

"See there, Garry, the Cross of Fire has been carried to all the races of the world — and the best of them have answered the call."

Their secret was made public property at the end of their convalescence, five miles behind the front line, beneath a shining arch of swords, upheld by a few of Garry's brother officers.

The only wedding march was played by the great guns up the line, her only bouquet, handed her by Old Jeff, was a cluster of crimson poppies — fit symbol for a wedding so celebrated. But they were very happy.

It was night, and Garry, back in the trenches, looked at the glowing hands of his radium watch. In fifteen minutes they must go over the top once more. He heard a few of the men softly singing the familiar lines: —

"Oh, Berlin road is long and rough,
But we will never fail,
For though the going may be tough,
We sure have hit that trail."

And then a strange vision came to him — as they do sometimes to those worn with the vigils of the trenches — childlike and highly colored as the dreams of his boyhood, as quaint and crudely symbolic as those John Bunyan saw, but very vivid and very real. It was a vision of troops, columns without end — French, English, American, and all the Allies, in the Glorious hour of victory. And in their wake they led triumphantly the Kaiser, his six sons, and a long line of the war-lords, all in chains.

Back of the lines Helen had placed the last wounded passenger on the stretcher of a new little grey ambulance. She paused, and to her, too, came a strange vision — of marching troops, only there were little things about her dream that were not in Garry's, things dear to a woman's heart. The balconies were flower-laden, the doorways and curbs were lined with people. And every now and then a woman broke from the crowd to be clasped in the arms of one of the marching soldiers, and little children, laughing, ran to meet them.

But the guns sounded again. She passed her hand across her forehead. The vision had disappeared.

"If every woman in America will only realize and help, that dream *will come true,*" she said aloud.

And turning toward the north: —

"God bless and keep you, Garry, wherever you are."

Then she mounted the little grey ambulance.

Garry's vision faded and he rubbed his eyes.

"It *is* a long road to Berlin, but if every man in America will only realize and help, in the end will come VICTORY!"

The whistle sounded. He mounted the ladder. In the light of a star-shell the figures of Jeff and Garry were silhouetted as they went over the top, and along the whole line rang the battle-cry: —

"UP AND AT THEM, AMERICA!"

THE END

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

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